No. 3
September, 1992
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ARENA MAGAZINE

GARFIELD & HULK ARTIST
GARY BARKER
INTERVIEWED

Whilce talks about Wetworks!

Up-To-Date News and Interviews

Dave Sim Speaks Out!

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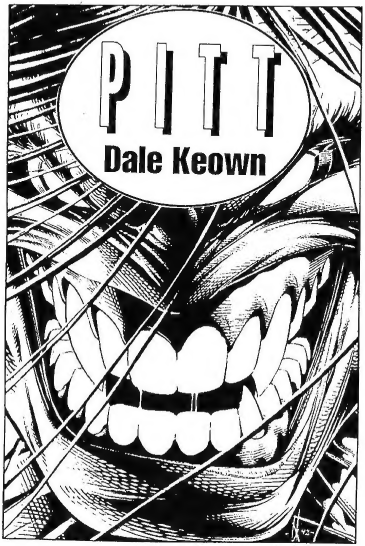
NEWSFLASH!

Dale Takes On A New Image...

Fans of Marvel's *The Incredible Hulk* take note: Dale Keown's last issue of the series is #399. He has left the House of Ideas and signed on with Image Comics to debut his new creator-owned series, the *Pitt*, which he will illustrate, while sharing the writing chores with Brian Hotton.

Asked to explain the concepts behind *Pitt*, Keown chuckled, "Between Erik Larsen and myself, we're keeping the 'monster as leading man' concept alive." Pitt is an alien being trapped on Earth who has assumed the role of super-hero. "He's running for his life," Keown said. "One of the warring factions on his planet has sent bounty hunters to Earth to track him down and that will be the crux of the story."

Early on, Pitt will encounter a little boy, Timmy. As Pitt's friend, the two have a psychic bond, "a link that will allow Pitt to learn English and function in society," Keown said. The first issue of *Pitt* is scheduled for November.



Marvel Buys Fleer!

Marvel Entertainment Group Inc. and Fleer Corp. said they have entered into a definitive agreement by which Marvel will acquire Fleer for $28 per share in cash, or a total of approximately $265 million.

The transaction has been unanimously approved by the boards of both companies. Under the agreement, a subsidiary of Marvel will begin a tender offer promptly for all of Fleer's shares at $28 per share. The offer is subject to, among other things, the tender of a majority of Fleer's outstanding shares.

William Bevins Jr., Marvel's Chief Executive, said, "Marvel has had a growing involvement in the entertainment trading card business since 1990 with the introduction of the Marvel Universe Trading Cards. The acquisition of Fleer enables us to rapidly increase our presence in the $1.2 billion market for sports and entertainment cards."

Paul Mullan, Chairman and Chief Executive of Fleer said, "In addition to our commitment to sports cards and confectionery products, our affiliation with Marvel will strengthen Fleer by association with one of the world's great libraries of entertainment characters. It will create exciting new product and cross-promotional marketing opportunities, enhancing our growth prospects in both trading cards and comic books."

About the cover..
Gary Barker expertly illustrates a scene of his choosing which inspired one of our feature articles this issue.

SEPTEMBER - 1992
Volume 1 - No. 3

Executive Publisher/Editor
Bob Hickey

Co-Publisher
Mike Hickey

Editor
Joe Martin

Head Writer
Jerry Smith

Contirbuting Writers
Dave Sim
Joe Martin

Design/Layouts
Cornerstone Design Group

Cover
Gary Barker & Bob Hickey

Cover Colors
Allen Freeman

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Editorial and Advertising Offices
264 Main St., Florence, Ky 41042

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LOOK OUT! HERE COMES THE PUBLISHER!

Again, I welcome you to another action-packed issue of *Arena Magazine*. As always there's been a lot of changes around here. The first is a name change. I felt that *Comics Arena* was a little restricting and that the gaming and trading card audience wasn't giving us a look, so from now on you'll be reading *Arena Magazine*.

Also, you get more pages with NO price guide; that's a larger news section, a larger interview, more gaming and trading card news than you'll find in any other magazine except those that specialize in that field. You'll notice a square binding this time, too. This allows an opportunity for *Arena* to expand and add inserts from publishers or other manufacturers in the future.

We seem to have put a large push on news and, so far, many readers have responded to our efforts quite favorably. What do you think?

In the future you'll see more involvement from professionals in the field. In this very issue we have Dave Sim's speech that was given at the Diamond Seminar. In our sixth issue, Lurene Haines will present a ten-part column on breaking into the business. Dan DiDio, writer for the now defunct *Inside Comics*, having talked to almost everybody involved, will be giving us the inside (no pun intended) scoop on Marvel's *2099* series. Sky Comics' writer Dwayne Haddix and newcomer Tony Parsons will be bringing on new columns next issue and, as always, we have the ever notable Jerry Smith giving you monthly doses of articles such as "Comics Now" and "Jerry's Top Ten". So, what more do you want? Keep writing and letting us know.

Until next month.

B.

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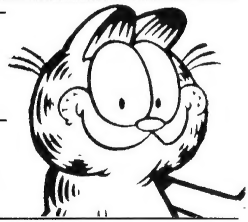

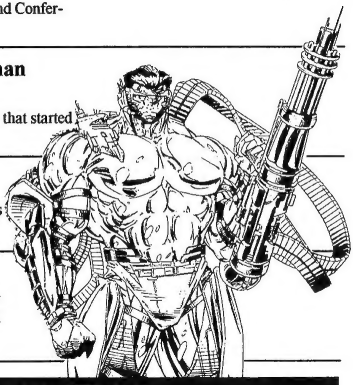

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How's this month been treating you, ladies and gents? Better? Good.

Y'know, today I want to talk about *evolution* - a process of gradual change from a simple to a more complex, or better, form. Ah, I think I just defined the universe, life itself and... *Arena Magazine*. Bob (the dreaded publisher) already filled you in on the why's and how's of that development so I'll go no further with it.

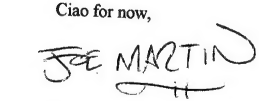
However, I want to talk about evolution in the comics industry. I mean, jeez! Talk about stasis (you know, standing still, stoppage, no go?)! Ever since the late 80's nobody can get a break. Even a publication that looked like *Inside Comics* can't seem to survive. It makes me afraid. It makes me hope that there will soon be a change and get things moving again. I know that retailers are wary these days. An incredible amount of dealers were burned time and again by fly-by-night publishers which, simply put, printed crap that was a blatant insult to trees everywhere.

Suggestion? Who knows. The only thing I can think of is that maybe the distributors should take a more objective view on the products they're going to carry and there should be some kind of way that retailers can see what a product is going to look like prior to ordering it. Right now, the industry seems to rely on two main things, *Chance* and *Hype*. Chance is the Frightful Entity that ate up the Industrious Swashbuckling Retailer and spit him/her out with malevolent glee. And Chance is the Headsman's Axe in many-a-publisher's unfortunate case (tons of great stuff, stuff you would love, you will Never, Ever lay eyes on). The fact is, if the retailers have no idea about a publication, *most* will not order (except those excellent #1's). Hype (a word that can make someone who truly cares about the industry cringe), on the other hand, is NOT a bad thing, *if* it is used correctly. If Hype gets art or material in front of the dealer so he/she can *see* what they're going to be getting, then I'm all for it!

I'm out of room and enough's enough! Read Dave Sim's feature this issue. He and I could talk for hours, I bet.

Cool. What a good time. Until next month, be swell.

Ciao for now,



The Editor

CONTRIBUTOR'S INFORMATION

Writing: Address all submissions to Arena Magazine, 264 Main Street, Florence, Kentucky, 41042. Please enclose a S.A.S.E. Submissions must be typed, double spaced. Keep a copy of your manuscript. Only send copies. Always put your name, complete address, and phone number on each page of article.

Art: Address all submissions to Arena Magazine, 264 Main Street, Florence, Kentucky, 41042. Send good copies of stats please. Put your name and address on the back of each piece of art. Always include an S.A.S.E. if you wish your materials returned.

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Special Thanks To...

Gary Barker, Larry Shell and Heroes World Distributors, Diamond Comic Distributors, Dan Manser, Doug Hiscock, Julia and Comics Interview, Tom Mason and Malibu Comics, Marty Stever, Dave Sim, Blue Line, Tom McLaughlin and TSR, Michael Krause and GDW, the supportive friends and families of those involved with Arena Magazine, Huey but not Hank (sorry, pal), Buddy at Brenner Printing, Cornerstone Design Group and our apologies to Mike Brewer for leaving your name out last issue (it was Jerry's fault).

And Thank You, readers!

A New **Shocking** Series!

By Dwayne Haddix, Bob Hickey and new-coming artist extraordinaire Don Hillsman!

COMING IN '93
FROM SKY COMICS **Watch For It!**

COMIC NEWS

Adventure Comics' Monster Posse

Start the panic... now!!

Greg Boone returns to comics and brings with him Rosie Rockyajocca, Kid Mum "E", Ms. Li'l Bit, Squishy Fish, Zeta Ski and Wack Mack Dwac. Together they form *The Monster Posse*, four aliens who have been kicked out of school and run away, and they end upcrash landing in Central Park. They are taken in by hairdresser/ actress/ UFO buff Rosie Rockyajocca, who promises to take care of them and protect them. Boone says, ``...there's a large UFO problem in the New York area. I find it all very humorous. I poke fun at it.

Look for it from Malibus Adventure Comics line! The 3-issue mini-series ships in October.

Bratpack Collected

It's finally here! Rick Veitch's series that set the comics industry on fire! The most controversial mini-series of 1991 is now available in a beautiful collected edition: 176 pages of truth and evil, heroes and villains, life and death, sex, violence, religion, drugs and, of course, superheroes.

The Bratpack Collected Edition features a new full-colored wraparound cover, an introduction by *Neil Gaiman*, 14 pages of brand new interior art and an exciting and surprising all-new ending! Bratpack is the first book in a cycle of Rick Veitch novels called the King Hell Heroic. The next book in the saga, *The Maximortal*, an ongoing full-color series from King Hell/ Tundra, will begin serialization in comic book form this month!

Antarctic Press' Special S.T.D.

AIDS, Gonorrhea, Syphilis...you've heard of them, but how much do you know about these diseases? Do you know what causes them? What symptoms are associated with each disease? How are they treated?

Antarctic Press felt that in this age of sexual tolerance, issues regarding sexuallty transmitted diseases should be addressed. Diseases like AIDS are fatal, yet very few know the truths regarding the disease. The stated purpose is not to be judgemental, but to present *the facts* about AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

The Comic Book Industry has very rarely presented information like this. Demographically, there is a wide audience that needs to learn this information. Hopefully, this book will accomplish both of these goals.

Antarctic is proposing to release a comic book that will discuss the realities of sexually transmitted diseases, but it will be easy to understand and enjoyable to read. It will be written by Joeming W. Dunn M.D., publisher and 1992 medical school graduate of the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, TX. It will be illustrated by Ben Dunn, creator of the popular series Ninja High School, who has volunteered the use of his time and characters to this important subject.

It was the intention of Antarctic Press to distribute this book for free, but due to the company's limited financial resources, they are unable to. Therefore, they're asking the retailers and distributors to purchase the book at cost. The book will have 16 pages with a full color cover and will be offered at a net cost of $6.25 per bundle of 25 copies. It is Antarctic's wish that this book be given out to anybody for free. The cost per book is an estimation of the print run, the higher the print run, the lower the cost. If this is the case, all proceeds will be donated to a charity like the AIDS foundation. *S.T.D.* by Joeming and Ben Dunn is scheduled for release in September.

COMIC NEWS

Batman and Green Arrow Together

A deadly plague is spreading and an infected Black Canary has only weeks to live. Green Arrow must accept Batman's help to track the source of the virus, and their trail leads to the deadly Poison Ivy in the hard-hitting tale *Batman/Green Arrow: The Poison Tomorrow*.

Batman/ Green Arrow: The Poison Tomorrow is a prestige format one-shot set for September by Denny O'Neil, Michael Netzer (formerly Nasser), and Josef Rubenstein. The skillful blending of action and suspense with strong ecological themes is reminiscient of O'Neil's earlier work with these characters, upholding the classic tradition of his *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* stories with a more modern and sophisticated tone.

Says O'Neil, "I've always found it deeply satisfying to deal with real-life problems in the context of the kind of extravagant adventure stories DC does best. When the process works, the adventure emphasizes the problem and the problem adds dramatic weight to the adventure."

Champions and Southern Knights Together

Artist Mark Propst has, following on the heels of George Perezs cover for *Southern Knights #35*, turned in six cover illustrations for the final chapters of the summerlong Morrigan Wars crossover among Flare, the League of Champions and the Southern Knights. The first cover, intended for *League of Champions #6*, is a reversal of the Perez piece. Where George showed the Southern Knights bursting out of a comic book to the utter astonishment of the League of Champions, Mark has turned it around and shown the League of Champions bursting out to the astonishment of the Southern Knights.

The four covers that following comprise a four part set that tells the story of the middle sequence of their eight-part crossover. It begins with the cover for *Flare #8*, which shows Flare, Icicle and Dragon above a world of the 18th century. It continues with the cover for *Southern Knights #36*, which shows Electrode, Icestar and Connie Ronin above a world of the 20th century. It goes on with the cover for *League of Champions #7*, which shows Aramis Merrow, Kristin Austin and the Marksman above a world of the 21st century. And it concludes with the cover for *Flare #9*, which shows Rose traveling through time on her quest to find the nine missing comrades.

The final Propst cover puts everybody on stage for the wrap up of the Morrigan Wars in *League of Champions #8*! Thats the issue in which the final battle is fought to prevent the Celtic goddess Morrigan from gaining control of time itself.

COMIC NEWS

Dinosaurs from Disney

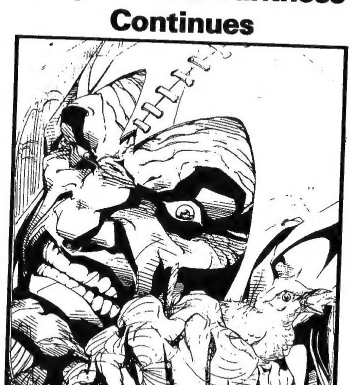
The Henson/Disney creation, *Dinosaurs*, lumbers to the direct market for the first time with a low, low price of $2.95. The new adventures of the Sinclairs, TV's hottest family, is now available in a two-issue mini-series in graphic novel format, written and drawn by some of the top talents in comics. The 48-page perfect bound first issue includes ``Baby and the Beanstalk", a *Dinosaur* fairy tale by Bobbi and David Weiss and art by Jackson Guice and Steve Mitchell and ``The Flying Fool" by Doug Murray with art by Joe Staton and Brian Garvey.

Although *Dinosaurs* will appear in a graphic novel format the price will be much less than regular graphic novels. *Dinosaurs* ships this December.

Now Comics and a Lizard?

What's big and green, guzzles beer, and has a schnoz even bigger than Ralph Snart's? That kooky, trouble-making lizard who used to get Ralph Snart drunk and desert him when the going got tough is back in his own mini-series. Join Mr. Lizard for his freshman year of college and see student life through his demented eyes! Plus, you won't want to miss the four-page origin story of Mr. Lizard. Free full-color Mr. Lizard button polybagged with each comic! *The Mr. Lizard Special #1* ships in September.

Eclipso - The Darkness Continues



Direct from the pages of *Eclipso: The Darkness Within*, DC's Summer Annuals crossover event, is the new monthly ongoing series *Eclipso*. "I want to give nightmares to 12-year olds," says Kieth Giffen, writer, with Robert Loren Fleming, of Eclipso. "This book will give everybody nightmares," says editor Michael Eury. "Eclipso is more than the story of a classic villain. It's a monthly study of evil."

Eclipso is firmly set in DC continuity, yet is a dark, frightening supernatural book that will appeal equally to readers of superhero comics and of *Sandman*. The first issue reestablishes Eclipso after the events of Eclipso: The Darkness Within. One of his first activities is to set himself up as a murderous South American drug lord. Later issues feature Dr. Bruce Gordon, the villain's former alter ego, as an Eclipso-hunter, in the spirit of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, with Gordon as a Von Helsing to Eclipso's Dracula.

"Eclipso's plans may have setbacks," explains Eury, "but he will never be defeated. He feeds off the evil of mankind and so long as there is evil, there will be Eclipso." Art on the series is provided by Bart Sears and Mark Pennington, penciller and inker respectively of *Eclipso: The Darkness Within #1-2*. The ongoing series carries the same visual intensity the team brought to those bookend chapters, with an added sense of grim horror. *Eclipso* is a 32-page ongoing comic in the standard format and ships in September.

COMIC NEWS

Tundra Gives You White Trash

Dean is your average loud-mouthed bitchin' teenage metal head with dreams of squealing his strat in every stadium across the country. So he packs up his stuff and starts hitching to L.A.. Then, destiny strikes! Dean gets a lift from an overweight rocker in a pink cadillac who don't give no rides to no faggots, pinkos, weirdos, dopeheads or smart-mouthed college kids. Together they lay waste to everything in their way in the name of God-fearing American values. *White Trash* is a *deliverance* for the MTV generation. It drops a nuclear warhead on the American Dream. Writer Gordon Rennie and artist Martin Edmond rip open the underbelly of America and dance on the entrails.

"If the *National Enquirer* were a road movie scripted by Hunter S. Thompson, directed by the Coen Brothers with a soundtrack by Axel Rose, *White Trash* would still piss all over it..."

White Trash is 32 pages packed full of violence, social commentary, black humor and mind-blowing full-color painted artwork. It's a kick in the ass for the entire comics industry. Yowza! Ships in September!

Vampires and Bikinis

Acid Rain Studios present Mark Paniccia's *1993 Vampire Bikini Comic Calendar*. It's one dozen beautiful bikinied vampire vixens brought to you just in time for Halloween. Paniccia is the writer and illustrator of *Sex & Death* and *The Pandora Pill* from Acid Rain Studios. Also, there's a special limited signed and numbered edition also available, so if you're a fan of Vampires, or bikinis, you'll love this special and totally unique swimsuit comic! Ships in October.

New Imprint From Heroic Publishing

In conjunction with Craig Stormon's Blue Comet Press, Heroic Publishing is adding *Blue Comet* as a new distribution imprint, with a new line of comic books. This new imprint will make its debut in November with the first issue of *Windraven Adventures*, featuring new characters and storylines completely unrelated to the world of *Flare* and the *League of Champions*. Editorially, the Blue Comet imprint will continue to belong to Craig Stormon, and will be completely separate from Heroic Publishing's other comic book titles.

The first issue of *Windraven Adventures* continues the storyline that began in the original Blue Comet Press flagship titles, *L.I.F.E. Brigade* and *Rough Raiders*, featuring the heroes of the Rough Raiders in battle against an alien menace that threatens to destroy the world of the future. But, now the focus shifts from the future to the present, and from the Rough Raiders to the beautiful, 300-year old American Indian sorceress, Windraven.

Look for it! And as a special bonus, the first issue of *Windraven Adventures* includes a *Rob Liefeld* sketch page, featuring Liefeld's interpretation of several of the Rough Raiders! *Windraven Adventures* begins in November under Craig Stormon's Blue Comet imprint, distributed by Heroic Publishing.

COMIC NEWS

Dark Horse Line-Up is Hot!

Mike Richardson, president of Dark Horse Comics, announced the schedule of first issue titles featuring an outstanding roster of original, creator-owned and licensed characters set to ship this summer. The nation's third largest comic book publisher, Dark Horse, is leading the competition with a diverse schedule that includes *Dark Horse Comics #1, The Mask Returns #1, Grendel: War Child #1, The American #1, Nexus The Liberator #1, Freaks' Amour #1,* and *Deadface #1.*

Included in this list of first-issue movie adaptations and movie-related titles to ship are: *Alien3 #1, The Terminator: Endgame #1, The Terminator: Hunters and Killers #1, James Bond 007: Serpent's Tooth #1, Robocop Vs. The Terminator #1, Aliens: Newt's Tale #1, Evil Dead: Army of Darkness #1, The Thing From Another World: Climate of Fear #1, Godzilla Color Special #1* and *Classic Star Wars #1.*

Also, Dark Horse will bring more authentic Japanese Manga titles to the U.S. this summer than any other American comic book publisher. Among these are *Intron Depot, Caravan Kidd #1, Orion #1* and *Venus Wars II #1.*

The Image Scorecard

Here's a handy checklist of guest-appearances and cross-overs within the Image Universe.

- *Spawn #6* features Overkill, the character created by Todd McFarlane, Rob Liefeld and Stan Lee for the Comic Book Greats video.
- Youngblood guest-stars in *Supreme #1.*
- Bedrock from Younblood guests in *Savage Dragon #3.*
- An original Supreme back-up story appears in *Shadowhawk #1.*
- Spawn will make a cameo appearance in *Shadowhawk #2.*
- Youngblood will make a guest appearance in *WILDC.A.T.S #3.*
- Wetworks will debut as two back-up features in *WILDC.A.T.S #2* and *#3.*
- *Cyberforce #3* features a guest appearance by Youngblood.

COMIC NEWS

Invasion of the Spider Slayers

First, word about the maniacal menace of Carnage spread quicker than wildfire throughout comic stores everywhere, instantly selling out *Amazing Spider-Man #361-363*. Then, the reunion of Peter Parker and his long lost parents reached not only print media like *USA Today*, but also television programs like *Entertainment Tonight* and the *Dennis Miller Show*. Now, *Amazing Spider-Man's* bi-weekly action is going to ignite comic racks quicker than a lit match to gasoline. "Invasion of the Spider Slayers" is a 6-issue series within a series running throughout *Amazing Spider-Man #368-373* which will physically and emotionally challenge Spider-Man in ways that readers have never seen before.

While Peter Parker is on a desperate quest to find the answers to the questions surrounding his parents' mysterious return, his situation drastically worsens. Alistair Smythe, the creator of the original Spider Slayer, is recruiting the most brilliant and deranged criminal minds in the Marvel Universe to succeed where he just barely failed. With each issue, the danger increases tenfold until Spidey is caught in a deathtrap that he seemingly cannot escape!

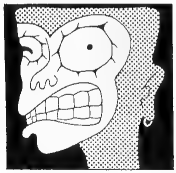
Amazing Spider-Man has become David Micheline's writing pinnacle. Combining an action-packed plot with compelling characterization, "Invasion of the Spider Slayers" will be one of his greatest bi-weekly stories to date. Artist Mark Bagley continues to deliver staggering pencils of everyone's favorite wall-crawler. Look for it!!

A Mad Monkey's Masquerade

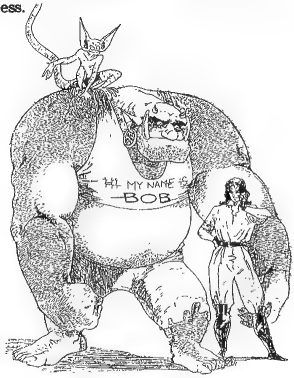
The curtains close as the last performance of daylight ends. The dusk is slowly transforming into the dark. Slumber weaves a hypnotic ballad that lures young Davey into her bosom. He has fallen asleep, and is dreaming.

Unlike most children, Davey's dreams are not mere hallucinations brought about by consumption of sweets at bedtime. Davey's dreams are as real as the thorn of a rosebush that draws blood from a careless admirer. In the realm of slumber, just left of imagination, one will find his playground. It is a world that is subject to change at the drop of a dime.

Davey himself no longer bears resemblance to the three foot, freckle-faced child buried under mounds of blankets. Here, he is known as the Dark Prince. A black maned adventurer, who trips throughout the fantastic with Bob, an enormous fanged monster, and Shmegal, a creature of mirth. Together, they pursue the mysteries found at the *Masquerade*.



Masquerade is a 40 page, prestige format one shot with a full color center spread. It is written by Chris Royal and illustrated by Jason Armstrong. From Mad Monkey Press.

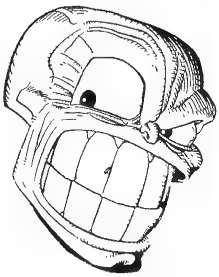


COMIC NEWS

The Mask Returns!

The power of The Mask is back in *The Mask Returns #1*, the first in a four-issue series. In this storyline, the Mask is being used to commit unspeakable crimes! How can this be? Is anyone safe? All this and more in the exciting return of the wildest character in comics. As an added bonus, you'll see The Mask's greatest foe, the most powerful man in the universe - Walter! Written by John Arcudi and illustrated by Doug Mahnke (in a style reminiscient of Frank Miller's and Geoff Darrow's *Hard Boiled*), this is one of the most exciting series of the year!

Publisher Mike Richardson announced the first issue of *The Mask Returns* will include a free cut-out, 12-point card stock color mask of The Mask. "You can become *The Mask* with your free *The Mask* mask from *The Mask Returns*," he says. "However, as company president, I'm obligated to advise The Mask mask wearers that the magical properties are not included!" Shipping in September, if you miss this you're crazed! Or maybe you're just *normal*.



News Or A Mirage?

At long last, Mirage has made up its collective mind about a title for the new anthology series scheduled to appear this fall. There were so many submissions that the choice was a difficult one! Two ideas were combined in to one to come up with *Plastron Cafe*. "Plastron" (the ventral part of a turtle's shell) was suggested to the Mirage crew by *Jennifer Lynn Weston* of Florida and *Christopher Terrell* of Massachusetts entered the title "Mirage Cafe". Both entrants receive prizes for their entries as well as several runner-ups.

. In the latest episode of the 13-part series of "City At War" in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #51* (which is part 2, by the way), April starts a new life in sunny California. Meanwhile, Casey loses his way in the dark heartland of America and the Turtles face an uncertain future back in the big, bad Apple. Co-created by Eastman and Laird, penciled by Jim Lawson and cover by Craig Farley, this is the start of a new era for Turtle enthusiasts.

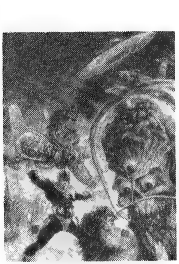
Mark Bode and Larry Todd bring the late Vaughn Bodes' characters to life in this special chrono-adventure, *Time's Pipeline*. This color TMNT special takes the Turtles to a planet populated by Bode characters. Vibrant color and lots of action and adventure enhance this tale as the Turtles try to get back home and end up vagabonds.

COMIC NEWS

Mr. Monster Attacks!

Everyone's favorite monster fighter returns! It's Doctor Strongfort Stearne, better known to the medical profession as > > CRACK-A-BOOM < < Mr. Monster! *Mr. Monster Attacks*! is a three-issue series returning the wacky, devil-better-take-care World's Greatest Monster Fighter to the color comic book stands.

Each issue includes three to four stories emphasizing tales of the alien invasion by Michael T. Gilbert and some of the top creators in comics, including Simon Bisley, Dave Gibbons and Sam Kieth. Don't miss this exciting new series which is a prelude to Tundra's *The Complete Mr. Monster: His Books of Forbidden Knowledge* color collections, and the off-beat two-issue *Crack-A-Boom* humorous horror anthology - both coming later this year!



Horror, Espionage, Superheroes...Necroscope!

"Dead men tell no tales, except to Harry Keough, necroscope. And what they tell him is horrifying!"
Brian Lumley, Necroscope

Malibu Comics has acquired the rights to Brian Lumley's million-selling *Necroscope* series and will launch a full color series in October. Martin Powell will adapt Lumley's prose for the comics and artist Daerick Gross will paint each issue. Lumley will act as a consultant on the series and has approved each step of the book's development. Award-winning artist Bob Eggleton, who has painted the covers for the novels, will illustrate the cover to the first issue.

Powell has a close relationship with the macabre. He created the acclaimed *Scarlet In Gaslight* where Sherlock Holmes met Dracula and adapted Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. In the series, Harry Keough and Boris Dragosani have one thing in common: they can communicate directly with the dead. Dragosani works for the Soviet Union's special E branch, which is staffed by people with special paranormal abilities. Dragosani's ultimate goal is to take over the Soviet Union, "and then, of course, the world," Powell said. Keough, who has been hearing "voices" for most of his life, is an author who writes about - you guessed it - necroscopes. He is eventually contacted by the British E Branch, and goes to work for them.

Malibu will be working in conjunction with the book's publisher, Tor Books, and several Necroscope licensees on cross promotional ventures. *Necroscope*, written by Martin Powell and fully painted by Daerick Gross, will be on the stands in October from Malibu Comics. The series is intended for mature readers.

COMIC NEWS

Niven, Byrne and The Green Lantern Corps

For the first time, the history of the Green Lantern Corps is revealed in the prestige format one-shot *Green Lantern: Ganthet's Tale*. Larry Niven, Hugo and Nebula award-winning science-fiction writer, and John Byrne, fan-favorite comic-book writer and artist, team to produce a compelling tale with strong repurcussions for the Green Lantern Corps. Niven has provided the story for *Ganthet's Tale*, using his expertise with imaginative, technically-based science fiction. Byrne has supplied the dialogue, complete art and lettering, enhancing Niven's concepts with the skill of a veteran comics storyteller.

Though *Ganthet's Tale* is linked strongly to the Green Lantern continuity, it is entirely self-contained, making it perfect for occasional readers of comics, particularly science-fiction fans, as well as for regular DC readers. The story reveals many secrets about the origin of the Corps, including the source and function of the Power Rings.

Green Lantern: Ganthet's Tale will have a special foil-enhanced cover and will ship in September from DC Comics.

New Series From Appleseed Creator

A new series from master storyteller Masamune Shirow - creator of *Appleseed, Black Magic* and *Dominion* - is always an event, and Dark Horse Comics and Studio Proteus are proud to present Shirow's *Orion* in English for the first time. The world of *Orion* is no ordinary world; Shirow has blended mythology, religion and science fiction into a wildly unique reality. Gods from both the past and the future can be summoned and manipulated, but never entirely controlled - "psychoscience" and sorcery rituals are the fuels that power *Orions'* universe.

In the year 52 A.D. (Astro Domino), the thriving Greater Galaxy People's Empire has accumulated so much negative karma that the Empire is threatened with a collapse. A scientist/sorcerer attempts to destroy this negative karma, but a legendary priest discovers that the plan is fatally flawed and could have disastrous affects. Thus begins a conflict of apocalyptic proportions, where battles rage in heaven and on earth. In the eye of this mystic storm is Seska, a powerful sorcereress and warrior whose involvement could tip the karmic scales to salvation...or Armageddon! Story, art and painted cover by Masamune Shirow. Ships bi-monthly, starting in September.

COMIC NEWS

Parody Press's "Spittin' Image Comics Month"

Don Chin (*X-Farce*) and Rus Sever (*Web of Spider-Man*) bring you *Oldblood #1*! That's right. When 11 young super-studs and studdettes get blown up by a freak land-mine accident in Iraq, only a last minute blood transfusion can save them. Unfortunately, this blood's been contaminated with Alzheimer's disease and has turned the Youngstuds into blabbering geezers! Join Senile, Eye-Failure and the rest as they atempt to find a cure and, more importantly, a plot! Also featuring those really conceited heroes, Bragade!

Writer and artist Bill Maus (X-Farce) does *Yawn #1*. Boring his way to the top of the comic charts, there's a new hero in town and he's out to put together the ultimate costume - but there's a little trouble with this considering the parts he wants to use belong to other "better-known" superdudes. Find out the mysterious origin of Yawn, the crusader with chronic insomnia, who derived his powers by drinking mass quantities of coffee! This is the book that asks the question: "Where can you find a dry cleaner who won't be suspicious of a giant cape with bird droppings on it?" Bill Maus teams with Kurt Hathaway for *The Sewage Dragoon #1*. From way deep within the sewers of Chicago comes a tough, gritty hero who also happens to smell like a heap of old garbage rotting in the sun! Watch as this one-man S.W.E.A.T. team takes his enemies to the cleaners - too bad he wouldn't go there, too! He's overpowering...in more ways than one! Thank God it's not a scratch & sniff cover! So much fun, you'll hurl!

All these titles come streaking toward you this September from Parody Press, and don't even think about missing their regular title, *Adolescent Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters*!

DC's New Hero...Valor

As *Eclipso: The Darkness Within* concludes, the young Lar Gand emerges a hero and is given the name Valor. Now his adventures continue in the new ongoing mothly series, *Valor*.

Written by Robert Loren Fleming, who played an integral role in planning DC's Summer Annuals crossover event, *Valor #1* serves as as epilogue to that crossover and establishes a grudge match between Valor and Eclipso. Due to his lengthy possession by Eclipso, Valor is obsessed with Eclipso's evil and is compelled to prevent the villain's plans to build a new base, a Lunar City.

Valor is a complement to the new ongoing *Eclipso*, but the two books are not bound together. "Eclipso is a dark, grim series, with a classic villain at its core," says editor Michael Eury. "Valor is quite the opposite. It's about a young hero, discovering what it's like to be so powerful."

These adventures occur in the 20th century before the Legion Of Super-Heroes brings Valor to the future. "readers, particularly long-time Legion fans, know he's goig to be a legend," continues Eury. "But in Valor, he's just a big kid from another planet, taking a joyride in space."

Valor holds a strong appeal for all DC readers in that its secondary goal is to chart the DC Universe as Valor travels from one planet to another. On his journeys, he discovers new characters and encounters some that are rarely seen. The series will feature frequent guest stars form the DC Universe, including early appearances by Lex Luthor II and Vril Dox of L.E.G.I.O.N..

COMIC NEWS

Sneak Preview: Happy Happy, Joy Joy

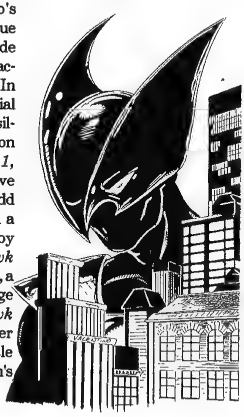
Ren & Stimpy are coming to Marvel Comics in October! Next month, the hilariously disgusting cat and dog team will be in a brand new monthly series. *Ren & Stimpy* presents all-new adventures of the duo, all totally in the spirit of this outlandish show.

In their first issue, "Ren & Stimpy Go Bad!" Stimpy's life takes an unexpected turn which leads both of them into a life of crime. Not even Powdered Toast Man can stop them now! In the second story, Ren & Stimpy have an "Alien Attack" in the adventures of Commander Hoek (Ren) and Cadet Stimpy. The two face off against the most feared being in the galaxy, the dreaded Space Yak! Also included in each issue are kooky ads, similar to "Log" and "Ask Dr. Stupid".

The wit of writer Dan Slott will keep you in stitches each and every month while artist Mike Kozalek adds the touches that really take *Ren & Stimpy* into the comic stratosphere. Ships in September!

Shadowhawk Update

Jim Valentino's *Shadowhawk* will continue to explore the "darker side of the Image Universe," according to the creator. In addition to the new special premium cover with the silver foil embossed logo on *Shadowhawk #1*, *Shadowhawk #2* will have a guest appearance by Todd McFarlane's Spawn and a wrap-around cover by Valentino. *Shadowhawk #3* will debut Liquid Fire, a new villain to the Image Universe, *Shadowhawk #4* will feature a crossover between Valentino's title character and Erik Larsen's *Savage Dragon*.



Vigil: Return To Grace

Grace Kimball returns in the all-new *Vigil: Return To Grace #1*. Hot on the heels of her first two-part adventure, which was Innovations' sleeper hit of '92, our reluctant heroine and her companion, actor Greg Tonell, find themselves mingling with the "beautiful people" of sunny Acapulco - not the most ideal setting for an ex-cop that just happens to be a vampire!

Written by Arvin Loudermilk and illustrated by Mike Iverson, *Vigil: Return To Grace #1* is a 52-page one shot from Innovation. Ships in September.

COMIC NEWS

The Devil Returns!

Martin Powell began his association with Sherlock Holmes in the critically acclaimed mini-series, *Scarlet In Gaslight*, published by Eternity Comics. That association with Holmes continues to this day as Martin is about to launch headlong into another Holmes mini-series: *Sherlock Holmes - Return Of The Devil*. Joining him is to original *Scarlet* artist, Seppo Makinen.

In *Return Of The Devil*, Holmes returns as the legendary detective faces his greatest case yet! It seems the Devil himself is scaring people to death and Holmes must find out the truth behind these mystical events. Is it really good old Beelzebub or Holmes' old nemesis, Prof. Moriarty, returned from the grave? Catch *Sherlock Holmes: Return Of The Devil* in September from Malibu and see!

Just One Looney Toon

He's hip. He's hot. He's weird. He's *Slapstick*, that wacky new hero who not only fights crime, but plays cruel tricks on it! And just who is Slapstick? He looks like a Saturday morning cartoon and has the same kind of powers.

Steve Harmon is not your average teenager. as the consummate class clown, he's always getting into trouble, thanks to his irrepressible sense of humor and mischievous tricks. Every situation he encounters becomes a funny trick opportunity. One day, a mysterious carnival arrives in town, which gives Steve a perfect chance to play his pranks. Donning a clown outfit to blend in, Steve discovers that the carnival is really an invasion force from another dimension, and the funhouse mirrors are actually dimensional gateways. These aliens are already snatching up the townspeople and sending them into their dimension for further study. The fate of his town, his friends, and perhaps the world now lies with Steve.

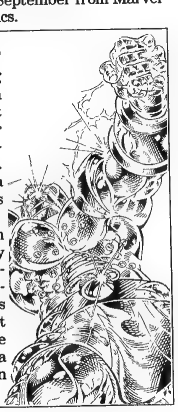
In a heroic attempt to save his friends, Steve leaps through one of the mirrors, but it's out of sync and Steve's molecular structure is scrambled, transforming him into a bizarre, shape-shifting creature made of unstable molecules. With his body now composed of electroplasm, he can be folded, compressed and mutilated without any damage - just like a toon. But there's more to him. Slapstick's body can also produce an electroplasmic static charge which he can use to create temporary objects out of thin air, e.g. cream pies, anvils, hammers...whatever his loony mind wants! Armed with his new powers, Slapstick races forth to save his friends and our world from the really evil clowns!

Set firmly tongue-in-cheek action, Len Kaminski (*Iron Man, Morbius*), James Fry (*Nomad*) and Terry Austin bring you *Slapstick #1* this September from Marvel Comics.

Soviet Super Soldiers

One of the more exciting special projects Marvel is releasing in September is the *Soviet Super Soldiers Special*, written by Fabian Nicieza (*X-Force, New Warriors*) and pencilled by two different artists, Angel Medina (*Warlock and the Infinity Watch*) and Javier Saltares (*Ghost Rider*). "The Red Triangle Agenda" is an incredible 64-page one-shot that takes place just before the fall of the Soviet Union. Three independent super human groups are being manipulated by a rogue branch of the KGB and the result is incredibly major battles between the groups.

The first group is the Supreme Soviets, who are the Russian equivalent of the Avengers. The Supreme Soviets are sponsored by the Soviet government and act as a state-sanctioned group of protectors. The second group is a band of outcast mutants who are an anti-government group much like the X-Men. This team of mutants seeks out, aids and protects other mutants. And the third group, Redmont 4, is a group of hard-line military assassins who seek to return the country to its Stalinist ways! The *Soviet Super Soldiers Special* is a must for both mutant lovers and fans of plain, hard-hitting action comic books. Das Vedanya!



COMIC NEWS

2099 - Marvel of the Future

Marvel 2099 is launched with the September 1st release of *Spider-Man 2099*, the first of Marvel's new line of ongoing comics depicting the adventures of Super Heroes of the future. Written by Peter David and illustrated by Rick Leonardi, issue #1 tells the story of Miguel O'Hara, a young geneticist with no ties to Peter Parker or the modern Spider-Man.

A series of incidents leads Miguel to become Spider-Man 2099, a hero with as many internalized demons to battle as external enemies, all in a futuristic world dominated by corrupt global corporations. The release of Spider-Man will be followed by *Ravage 2099* in October, *Doom 2099* in November and *Punisher 2099* in December.

Joey Cavalieri, the editor of the 2099 titles, says the new line is a "real, conserted attempt to show what the Marvel Universe is like a hundred years from now, from people who are really good at what they do and who really care about the comics."

Cavalieri also commended the creators working on the new line, adding that "there's a lot of talk now about how important art is to the medium, and not only does this line have great art, but the writing is phenomenal. They really have contributed a great deal to the world these characters live in."

Each issue of the *Marvel 2099* line will feature foil stamping on the cover.

Malibu Acquires Star Trek

Malibu Comics has announced that it has acquired the comic book rights to the new *Star Trek* television series: *Deep Space Nine*. The official announcement was made by Malibu publisher Dave Olbrich at the recent Diamond Comics Retailer Seminar.

The forthcoming televison series *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* is a spin-off from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and is scheduled to debut in January from Paramount.

Malibu Comics is currently planning a regular monthly series and quarterly special and is assembling the various creative talents for the books. Writers and artists are encouraged to submit samples via mail with a self-addressed stamped envelope (no phone calls, please) to Malibu Comics, Star trek Submissions, 5321 Sterling Center Drive, Westlake Village, CA 91361.

From The Sun In September

Sun Comic Publishing, that company with the hip logo, offers *High School Agent #1* and *#2* in September. The Empire State Building, New York City, Saturday, November 8th, 3:00 p.m. - Koshuke Kanamori meets his contact, a mysterious woman who gives him the mission and the equipment needed. New York Harbor, the next day - Koshuke blows up the terrorist's boat on schedule, and meets the woman who rushes him to a taxi and onto a plane bound for Japan. Fukawaga, Tokyo, Monday, November 10th, 10:20 a.m. - Koshuke is once again, late for class. The espionage agency is forcing Koshuke Kanamori to do its dirty work for them. If Koshuke doesn't comply, they will not only kill his parents, but the girl he likes at school. But when he finds out that the boat he blew up was manned by five men, Koshuke quits the company. What happens?

COMIC NEWS

He's Back, For The Final Round

This is the big one: the last of Dark Horse's Terminator series. In *The Terminator: Endgame #1*, the first of this final three-issue series, Skynet sends a big, brawling mother of a Terminator from the future to change the past. His goal: to prevent the birth of John Connor, even as Sarah goes into labor! Mary Randall is the one woman who might save the future - but at what cost to the present? Written by James Robinson, this series ties up all the loose ends form previous Terminator storylines while bringing us to a slam-bang finish. Pencil artist Jackson Guice (*Nick Fury: Agent of Shield*) and inker John Beatty join forces to create powerful interior art; British artist John Higgins (*The Thing From Another World*) supplies the cover painting. Ships in September.

Timber Wolf Comes A'Howlin'

Fresh from his success in *The Legion Of Super Heroes Annual #3*, Timber Wolf stars in his own 5-issue miniseries, *Timber Wolf*. It's set in the 20th century and intended for the mainstream super-hero fan.

When Timber Wolf encounters Thrust, a new character with a major streak of ultraviolence, a major battle ensues. "They're knocking down walls," says editor Michael Eury. "Big walls."

Eury describes Timber Wolf as "a beast-man who is essentially good-hearted, but with an occasional instinct to howl at the moon. He operates 1000 years out of synch with the world and this leads him into all kinds of trouble."

Also introduced into this mini-series is Point Force, a government-sanctioned group of paranormals, who, at first, can't decide whether to incarcerate Timber Wolf or recruit him. By issue #5, Timber Wolf becomes the linchpin of this new and exciting group of super-powered agents and misfits. *Timber Wolf* is written and inked by Al Gordon, with pencil art by Joe Phillips. The team provides an exciting look at a rough-and-tumble character in the tradition of Lobo and Deathstroke.

Tony Stark's Past Revealed

For thirty years, Marvel Comics readers have been in the dark about the early life of Tony Stark, but thanks to his recent brush with death, Iron Man enthusiasts will finally discover what makes one of the elder statesmen of the Marvel Universe tick. After *Iron Man #284*, which shipped July 28th, readers may be wondering if Stark is really dead, The answer, of course, is no. But the creative team at Marvel is using the storyline of Tony's infirmity to explore his until-now unexplored past.

After falling into a death-like state, the victim of a techno-virus, Stark begins to dream vividly, flashing back on various chapters of his past life. Readers will learn, for example, that Stark came from a dysfunctional family, which most likely later led to his alcoholism. While the outside world believes Stark has died, his best friend, Jim Rhodes, is wearing the Iron Man armor, continuing the hero's battle against villains like Spymaster, Lizard, and Firepower. Even Rhodes, however, thinks Stark is dead.

The armor, which was bequeathed to Rhodes by Stark, is a slightly modified version of the armor Stark wore. Rhodes' armor, for example, has an energy shiels on the left wrist and a weapon pod on the back. The laser guns on the shoulders of the armor are also removable, unlike those on Stark's armor. It is tailored specifically for Rhodes, and operates off his particular body impulses.

"The Death of Tony Stark" storyline concludes in issue #290, shipping in January of '93. Prior to that, readers can celebrate Iron Man's 350th appearance with a double-sized, silver-foil #288. Editor, Nel Yomtov, says, "you're seeing an invincible warrior facing the ultimate challenge. He's staring death in the face. That's what being a superhero is all about. And he's dealing with it on a very personal level. He's having to deal with repressed memories of his childhood - the things that have molded him into what he is today."

Written by Len Kaminski, pencilled by Kevin Hopgood, inked by Andrew Popoy on #284-5 and Mike DeCarlo from #286 on.

COMIC NEWS

X-ecutioner's Song

Last year the premiere of two new x-books, *X-Force* and *X-Men*, gave rise to a new dawn in the mutant era. In the wake of last month's landmark *Cable* limited series, this fall will see the biggest, baddest and best mutant crossover ever. For the next three months, starting in September, *Uncanny X-Men, X-Factor, X-Men* and *X-Force* will all crossover into a 12-part mutant extravaganza entitled "X-ecutioner's Song!"

The events and secrets revealed in the *Cable* limited series have convinced Stryfe that now is the time to begin his assault on the X-Men, Mr. Sinister and Apocalypse. It begins with an assassination attempt on Charles Xavier and leads to the kidnapping of Cyclops and Jean Grey. These events prompt the X-Men to split into two groups - the gold and the blue - one to rescue Scott and Jean, the other to confront X-Force. X-Factor is also called in to aid in this mission as Xavier's life hangs in the balance.

The epic tale featuring most of Marvel's merry mutants will include such cataclysmic clashes as Bishop and Wolverine's fight with Cable and Archangel's confrontation with his creator, Apocalypse. You'll also see the return of Apocalypse's Four Horsemen.

Also with this saga, a new team of X-creators will be introduced. Fabian Nicieza (*X-Force, New Warriors*) will be writing *X-Men* and is joined by artist Andy Kubert (*Ghost Rider*). Fabian will also continue chronicling the adventures of the ultimate mutant task group, *X-Force* with pencils by Greg Capullo (*Quasar*). Scott Lobdell will script *Uncanny X-Men* with Brandon Peterson taking over art chores for the duration of the crossover. Fan-faves Peter David and Larry Stroman will both continue their popular run on *X-Factor* (however, rumor has it that Stroman will be leaving Marvel to do his own Image title, *Tribe*, and Joe Quesada of *The Ray* and *Batman: Sword of Azrael* will take over pencilling chores).

Each issue of "X-ecutioner's Song" will come polybagged with one of 12 different trading cards. Each card is unique to that specific issue. X marks the spot!

Blood & Roses Become a Mini-Series

It started as a portfolio. Joe Martin and Bob Hickey thought it would be hip to fashion a portfolio of two babes on a raging romp through the timestream. Nothing major, just some nice art for people to savor. Conventions and orders for the portfolio quickly changed their minds. Now you can look forward to a **Blood & Roses** three issue color mini-series due out in early '93. It will be written by *Jerry Smith*, co-scripted by *Joe Martin*, pencilled by newcomer *Gene Gonzales* and inked by *Bob Hickey*. More to come on what guarantees to be a sizzling new mini-series!

COMIC NEWS

Wetworks from Whilce

Whilce Portacio, Brandon Choi and Scott Williams deal out *Wetworks #1* this October and it looks to be something you won't want to miss. First of all, Wetwork is an Agency slang term for a covert operation involving close quarter killing where the operative's "hands got *wet* from blood". Nice. Well, this gives you an idea for what to expect from Whilce and company (find out more in this issue's interview with Whilce by Hank Kanalz).

Team 7 is America's deadliest strike force. Trained to fight the war against international terrorism in the black world of covert operations, Jackson Dane and his Team have never lost a fight...yet. During the course of theri next mission they shall be transformed from highly traines soldiers into nigh invincible warriors of steel. Unfortunately, it will also mark the start of a deadly war against monstrous enemies straight out of man's deepest and darkest nightmares!

The Team has fought in countless bloody confrontations, but this time they are up against eternal enemies to whom death has little or no meaning. Anticipating the bitter and bloody battles to come, the Team's mysterious patron, Mr. Waring, aptly renames it *Wetworks*. Can even their deadly military skills coupled with their near invulnerable secret weapon be enough to stem the tide of the inhuman onslaught? Wetworks has had sneak preview stroies in Jim Lee's *WILDC.A.T.S #2* and *#3*.

Read the interview with Whilce about *Wetworks* on page 50!

Blue Line Sponsors"Get Published Contest"

Blue Line products have caught on and are still growing since their debut product, **Blue Line Comic Book Pages**, was released in February of 1991. Since that time, over 150,000 pages have been sold internationally. And **Blue Line** has also released a second product, **Blue Line Concept Sketch Pages** which are also doing quite well.

The distributor of these products, **Sky Comics**, is collaborating with **Blue Line** in sponsoring a contest entitled *The Blue Line "Get Published" Contest*. The name is pretty self-explanatory, however for technicalities' sake, this is a competition aimed at giving an amateur artist and **Blue Line** user a chance to have their work published in an actual comic book.

The contest begins July 1st and will run until December 15th. Upon the expiration date a winner will be picked. The winner will be contacted by **Sky Comics** and their story will be scheduled for publication (probably in early 1993)!! The story must be a complete (drawn, inked & lettered) twenty pages in length and collaboration among persons on the creative chores is highly suggested by **Sky Comics** and **Blue Line**. More than one submission is accepted considering the more practice one gets the better he/she becomes. Submit copies only! Also, the front cover of the **Blue Line** pack purchased must be included with the submission. Specially marked packs of **Blue Line** products will begin shipping in July.

Terms and conditions can be acquired by purchasing Blue Line products, in various advertisements or by sending an SASE to *Sky Comics, 264 Main Street, Florence, KY 41042.*

Gary Barker, our feature interview, does a dynamic Wonder Woman. Yowza!

GARY BARKER INTERVIEWED

CA: How are you, today?

Gary: Ah, pretty good.

CA: Can't say great, can't say terrible?

Gary: Oh, I'm hanging in there.

CA: To get started, let me make it clear to the readers that you're a newcomer to comic publishing, just recently being commissioned by both Marvel and DC to do work, however you are not a young one to the art field in general. When did your career in commercial illustration begin?

Gary: It began when I was 19. I was going to the University of Indianapolis which back then was Indiana Central. At the end of my sophomore year I got a job doing concert posters for a place called Serigraphics and this was like a dream come true, at that age getting that kind of a job. I did posters for groups like Jimmy Buffett, Mahogany Rush, E.L.O., that kind of stuff. I also did some screenprinting. The problem with this was that at the end of the summer, he asked me if I would quit college and go to work for him for $4.00 an hour (laughs). Uh, no! It was fun to be there for that summer, though. The next summer I was at the Benjamin Harrison Center for the arts and crafts...painting, drawing, photography, all that kinds of stuff. From there, I freelanced for about six years on a part-time basis. After college, I went back to Serigraphics and did more poster designs and screenprinting. I left there in 1982 because my grandma had left me an inheritance and I thought that was a good a time as any to get out of screenprinting and try to do something on my own. So, I created *Captain Cartoon*.

CA: Ah, yes, Captain Cartoon. I remember you telling me about this character.

Gary: Yeah, I used to dress up in tights and a cape and a World War II army flying ace helmet with glittery sneakers and the whole bit. Needless to

A spoof of the Justice League stemming from The Three Stooges. You can figure it out.

say, my dad was real proud (laughter). It didn't make me much money but it did get me on some of the local TV shows and one of them was the *Cowboy Bob Show*.

CA: So, you became a celebrity.

Gary: (Laughs) If you can call being on Cowboy Bob's Corral a celebrity! It opened a lot of doors. For six or seven months, I made a lot of appearances at art fairs and benefits doing caricatures and such. Cowboy Bob wanted me to do some promotional stuff for a big pizza place thing and he hooked me up with the HUGE Company and it turned out that the owners, Tom and Sandy Huge, knew Jim Davis (Garfield). I was like, "Yeah, don't hand me that kind of crap" but, uh, sure enough they did because later that week Sandy called me and said, "Look, Jim needs as assistant cartoonist. You want the job?" Well, at that time, I was really tired of starving and I said "Sure!" In November of '83 I got a call from Jim Davis asking me if I would come in for an interview. For the first time in my life I listened to my father and he said, "You go up in that costume and you will not get that job." Okay. So, I figured, maybe he's right this time and I went up there in a three-piece suit with my portfolio and the first thing out of Jim's mouth is, *"Where's Captain Cartoon?"* I was like, "Oh, man, I'm never gonna listen to that man again!" (Laughs).

CA: Nevertheless, Jim must've been impressed.

Gary: Well, the way it worked is that Jim would bring all the artists in and they would stand around and look at your portfolio. I left that night not sure if I had the job but I had this feeling sort of like "pins and needles" thinking, "Man, I'd really like to work for this operation". About 8'o clock that night, Jim called me and said "When can you start?" Two weeks later, I was up here (in Muncie, IN).

CA: Working on Garfield?

Gary: Yup. Garfield.

CA: How does that work? I mean Jim's name is attributed to everything that's Garfield-related. Does he give any credit where it's due?

Gary: Oh, yeah. Jim's real gracious about giving credit whenever he can. He even gave each of us a two-second spot on the *Garfield Happy Birthday Animation Special* that came out a couple years back. He always tries to mention us in interviews and we get credit in the books when its feasible. I'd never expect my name on the strip because it should always be Jim's name on the strip. Jim created it.

CA: So, is *Paws, Inc.* your company?

Gary: No, that's Jim's company. He saw how big Garfield was becoming, which sure shocked him actually so, uh, he created Paws.

Gary's cover for The Adventures of the Thing #4. Inks by Mark Farmer.

A splash for Showcase '93 #8 from DC starring Deathstroke and Peacemaker.

CA: Garfield caught on quite rapidly.

Gary: It did and Jim suddenly had to bring in people to help him or he would just be overwhelmed. I've heard people criticize and say that it's a "strip by committee" and so on but the way I see it is that Jim and his creation have provided me and 46 other people with a very nice living and an incredible benefit package. Jim's main responsibility is to write but when he realized he couldn't continue doing everything he hired sombody that he felt could fill that particular job. So, my job is to draw the comic strip. Jim writes it out and he also has a guy out in California that helps him write periodically. He flies into town and he and Jim spend a week or three together.

CA: And they just jam and write out a whole bunch of Garfield strips.

Gary: Right. The work that has to get done in a day's time is pretty mind-boggling. There's about 90-some clients and licensees, *67 countries* which translates into "I Don't Know How Many" languages...

CA: He really does need the help!

Gary: Yeah, and the deadline pressures are sometimes pretty astronomical. Anyway, I receive thumbnails and get a week's worth at a time and I lay these out on board with a non-photo blue pencil. Then it's inked and lettered.

CA: Did you grow up a fan of comic books?

Gary: Oh, yeah! I started buying comics when I was just six or seven years old. I remember picking up *Teen Titans #2*, the first series, off the stands. I'm old (laughs)!

CA: Did you have aspirations of working on comics at that time, thinking "wouldn't this be great?!"

Gary: Ever since I got that first comic book, I knew that that's what I wanted to do.

CA: What was or is your favorite titles?

Gary: Throughout my whole life, it's always been *Superman*. When I was a kid, of course we didn't have comic book stores because this was the mid-60's, you had to go to the drug store. I'd have maybe a quarter and I'd go up to the rack and get *two comics*. Fortunately, I'd get to spend the week with my grandmother and she would act as though she had always forgotten to get something and she'd let me run to the store sometimes three or four times. She'd give me enough money to get one comic book each time I went. She didn't want to spoil me and let me get them all at once, you know.

CA: But that was the fun way to do it.

Gary: Oh, yeah. So, like, how many times do I get to go to the store today? I'd get at least *twelve cents* and I always got all the *Superman* titles, the *Justice Leagues*, mostly DC's because Marvel's were always continued stories and a lot of the times you might get that one but you might miss the next issue and that was majorly frustrating to me as a kid. Plus, I have to admit, *I thought Spider-Man was a real weenie*. He was always sick or he was always whining about something (laughs). I'd sit there, as a kid, you know, and think, "this guy isn't tough! Now, Superman...nuthin' can hurt this guy!"

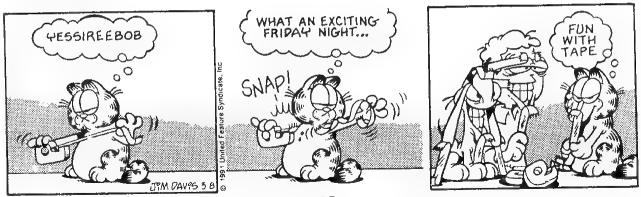
CA: Superman doesn't whine!

Gary: Yeah! If someone beat him up with green kryptonite, well, you knew that sooner or later he was gonna come back and just pop 'em one! I think, also, with *The Adventures of Superman* being on T.V. I just thought he was the greatest.

CA: In the 60's, Spider-Man was just catching on, though.

Gary: Yeah, that's probably true. The Marvel Universe, at

"...the work that has to get done in a day's time is pretty mind-boggling. There's about 90 some clients...67 countries which translates into 'I don't know how many' languages..."



that time, was growing incredibly. DC was still number one, then. Jeez! I'm really dating myself here. Marvel and DC have a lot of advantages with their characters and they're both very different from each other.

CA: They both have their own appeal, that's for certain.

Gary: With DC you had the Justice League...all your favorite characters in the same group. The early Avengers, after issue 9 or 10, you had Captain America, Hawkeye, Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver and none of those characters except Captain America were big characters so it was like...you know, I'd rather have the Justice League because it had Superman, Batman, Green Lantern and all the really good guys, you know.

CA: Yeah, I see where you're coming from but as you were reading these guys, certain artists probably influenced you. Who were they?

Gary: Well, I didn't know at the time but my all-time favorite who had the most influence on me as a kid was Curt Swan. I remember these covers of *Superman* and *Action* and *Jimmy Olsen* and I was just *mesmerized* by these covers! I'd sit and stare at them for hours and if Curt Swan did the interiors, especially 'cause mostly at that time he was inked by a guy named George Klein, I just thought that that was a chemistry that couldn't be beat. The only time that came close to that was when Curt Swan was teamed with Murphy Anderson, that was another match made in heaven. Anything Swan ever did, I would get. I didn't know it was Curt Swan, but I knew that style.

CA: Any others?

Gary: Well, there's many...let's see, there's Murphy Anderson, of course, and Carmen Infantino, and Ramona Fradon who was doing *Metamorpho*...

CA: You like to cartoon, that's noticeable in you portfolio.

Gary: A lot of that came from *Not Brand Ecch!*. I used to love those, too. Another artist I liked who I always thought was underrated was Marie Severin. She used to do the *Hulk* and *Tales To Astonish* and she did a lot of work in *Not Brand Ecch!* that was just marvelous.

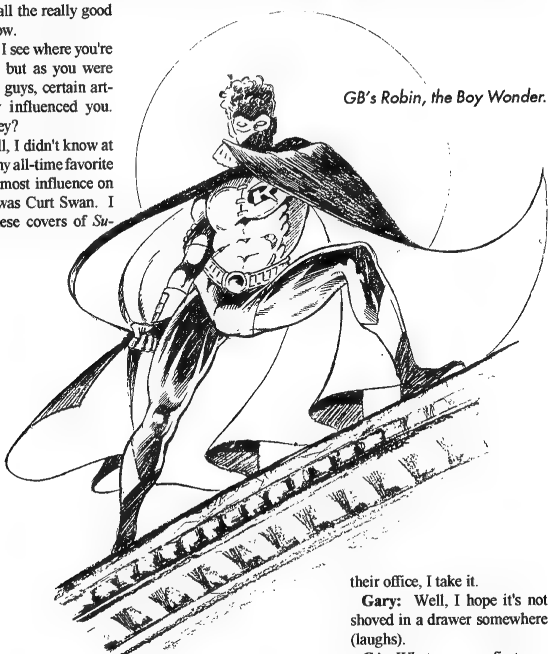
CA: One enjoyable piece you did was Just-A-League of Stooges. That's just great!

Gary: Uh-huh, that piece is now owned by Roger Stern and Carmelo Marlowe.

CA: Hanging in their den or their office, I take it.

Gary: Well, I hope it's not shoved in a drawer somewhere (laughs).

CA: What was your first pro-



GB's Robin, the Boy Wonder.

Gary's rendition of a Dark Horse character called (tentatively) the Icon as inked by Chris Warner.

fessional job in comics publishing?

Gary: Easy question. It was in *Dark Horse Presents #23*.

CA: What character?

Gary: Howard Unrah.

CA: Was it fun?

Gary: Nerve-wracking. It was my first story. I had sent samples to First, Now and AC Comics and I got replies from Now and Dark Horse and Now offered me *The Original Ghostbusters* but I thought that's just too much like what I'm already doing, cartooning, you know, so I took Howard Unrah from Dark Horse. He was one of the first mass-murderers and I really wouldn't point that story out except that it was my *first* comic book work. Now, it's kind of embarassing but *Mark Evanier* told me that would happen. He said, "No matter what you do, you're first comic...you're gonna hate it." He's right.

CA: You have another project with Dark Horse just waiting in the wings. *The Icon*, right?

Gary: Well, Icon came about three or four years ago and its was developed by *Randy Stradley* and *Mike Richardson*. From a paragraph or two, I designed the character that we came to call Icon but I don't know if that will end up being what it's called. It's sort of a, I don't want to give too much away, a character that isn't what he seems to be.

CA: You're right, that's not too specific.

Gary: (Laughs) Anyway, I thought it was pretty much dead because all this time had passed and personally I was working on *Kings of the Night* and I did issue number one and I couldn't get to issue number two and I was horribly late on that book. It was when I really find out how to gauge myself better.

CA: That was with Dark Horse also?

Gary: Yeah, after *Gateway to Hell*, which was the first story with Howard Unrah, I did a fill-in issue on *The Mark* and then *Kings of the Night*, which was written by Roy Thomas. When they first asked me to do it I said no because I was never really that big into barbarians. The only *Conan's* I have are the Barry Windsor-Smith issues. Finally, I said, "well, yeah, I'll give it a try."

CA: So, you did an issue?

Gary: I was suppose to do both issues, it was a two issue mini-series, but a project here at Paws took off which was the *Garfield Babes and Bullets* which was an adaptation of the T.V. special so I pretty much "hit the brick wall". It was sort of ironic at that time because I had just read a Steve Rude interview and he was describing the very same thing I was going through, which was "burn out". I just couldn't pull out of it, nothing was right, and I had a real bad attitude at that time. This lasted about seven months and I thought about quitting and moving to California. Anyway, I made it through and I was about five months late getting *Kings of the Night* done.

CA: They must've been pretty dead set on you doing that project since they didn't pull it and go on to someone else.

Gary: Well, they did for issue #2, finally. It spent even more time in other processes.

CA: So, it was almost a year in the making, eh?

Gary: Yeah, and I felt really bad about that, too, because it was like, well, something I just wasn't very committed to so I didn't get it done. That's why I'm much more cautious with what I take. Another thing Mark Evanier told me was, "Never take a project that you don't really, really want to do".

CA: From that point, where did you go?

Gary: Well, I didn't do anymore comic book stuff for a while, I just got real caught up in my Garfield work. I started working on getting Captain Cartoon launched, which it still isn't, yet. And I started a corporation with a partner, calling it *Juggernaut*

Might this be the Bat-Mite?

International, a licensing company. Hopefully, it'll take off by Christmas of '93. That's what I'm shooting for.

CA: And, what from there?

Gary: From there came Innovation. I did some work in *Hero Alliance Quarterly #2*, a ten-page story with some problems we won't go into.

CA: Okay.

Gary: And from there, I filled-in for *Dale Keown* on *The Incredible Hulk #389*.

CA: And you did it quite well I would like to say.

Gary: Oh, well, thank you.

CA: That was a Man-Thing story?

Gary: Yeah. It was not written by Peter David. It was written by Tom Field.

CA: Almost a totally different creative team?

Gary: Same inker...Mark Farmer and same editor.

CA: Well, they don't change editors for fill-in's that often. From there, you began your current project with DC?

Gary: Not yet. Well, how it came about was that I had attended the Mid-Ohio Con with a friend who was tired of my procrastinating so he grabbed my portfolio and shoved it in Tom DeFalco's face and I was offered something...at that time it was *Tales of Asgard* and then I got a call from Bobbie Chase asking me if I wanted to do a fill-in on the *Hulk*. I was like, "Man! The Hulk?! I don't believe this!"

CA: That's how that came about.

Gary: Yeah. From there I did 10 pages for *The Incredible Hulk Annual #18*. It was a "things to come" type story featuring the Pantheon.

CA: Okay, now your current project with DC is a Peacemaker/Deathstroke mini-series?

Gary: It's called, I think, the "Kobra Conspiracy". I also did a piece for the *Marvel Swimsuit Issue* and the cover for the *Adventures of the Thing #4*. I'm not sure why they're doing all this reprinting stuff.

CA: The Marvel Two-In-Ones...

Gary: Yeah, which for the most part, it's cheaper to get them as back-issues than to buy these new reprint versions.

CA: But you'll do a cover, won't you?

Gary: Sure.

CA: So, what's the "Kobra Conspiracy" gonna run?

Gary: I believe six issues.

CA: We've got a piece here with *the new Deathstroke* look which, so far, it doesn't look like too many people are keen on.

Gary: Hey, I'm not responsible for that!

CA: We won't blame you for that.

Gary: I did design the new Cobra costume. I don't know if it will be seen before this or not. *Neal Pozner* has given me a long time to get this project done which is greatly appreciated.

CA: Basically it's at your leisure?

Gary: He'd like to get ten pages every six weeks. I'm hardly doing that. It's more like ten pages every two months. I've got to work on getting quicker but DC is a little more conservative with the way they want you to lay out pages and stuff like that. They're more concerned with they way things are done.

CA: DC tends to be more conservative all the way around. Not so much hype as all the others.

Gary: Yeah, and that's not a bad or good statement. It's just an observation. And everybody I've talked to there have been great to work with. It's kind of funny, all those years I spent trying to break in and now it's like, "Wow!"

CA: Has it dawned on you, yet?

Gary: I don't think so. It's like something I've wanted for *soo long* and it was just *soo tough* to get there. Because I've been blasted by some of the best (laughs), just ripped to shreds! And, uh, I think everybody has to go through that.

CA: So, what's in your future, now?

Gary: Once I finish this thing for DC, I'm gonna sleep (laughs). Then I'm gonna see how Captain Cartoon is doing and Dark Horse is talking to me about starting back up on Icon. That's still very much alive. I think its really gonna be a sharp story and I'm also talking to *Sky Comics* about doing a story.

CA: Do you have a dream project?

Gary: Sure do...*Ultra the Multi-Alien* or the *Inferior Five*.

CA: Whoa. What would you do with them?

Gary: I'm not a writer. I just know I'd like to do it. I'm just an artist.

CA: There's *so many* writer-artists, though.

Gary: Oh, yeah and so many that truly prove they can write (laughs).

CA: Anyway, an Inferior Five mini-series will be coming out early next year, right?

Gary: That would be my dream project! In fact, I do have a plot for it now, I couldn't write it but I do have a concept for it. I'd approach probably Neal Pozner first as editor and, uh, he wrote the *Aquaman* mini-series a few years back and I really enjoyed it.

CA: It was nicely done.

Gary: Yeah. Actually I'd like to work with someone who understands comedy, of course. Tony Isabella would be very good on it or *Bill Loebs*.

CA: Loebs would be a good choice and incidentally he's a real nice guy.

Gary: Yeah, he is. But, uh, there's very little good humor in comics right now and that's what I really enjoy, that's what I still buy. It doesn't have to be the pie-in-the-face stuff. Characterization and humor, when used well, make things very entertaining, I think.

Gary's no stickler when it comes to Wolverine.

A slightly altered rendition of Supergirl (notice the boots), courtesy of Gary Barker.

CA: Okay, we've talked about writers...do you have any inkers names you want to spit out?

Gary: Oh, man, there's a lot...it was great to see *Mark Farmer's* inks on my stuff and *John Beatty* will be inking me on the DC job. I look forward to that. Primarily, I'm a penciller. I don't like my inks at all. Uh, I'm sure when we hang up I'll think of thousands but right now I'm drawing a blank.

CA: I'll throw some names out...Terry Austin?

Gary: Oh, yeah!

CA: Scott Williams and Art Thibert?

Gary: Yeah, yeah. In the comic industry there's far more people I admire and enjoy than who I don't. There's stuff that doesn't do anything for me, it's not bad, it just doesn't do anything for me.

CA: So, we'll say just about anybody until you go "NO!!"

Gary: (Laughs).

CA: I bet I could come up with a couple names you'd say no to.

Gary: I bet you could!

CA: But, I won't.

Gary: Okay. There's enough of that going on in the industry already, you know? One of the more degrading and upsetting things going on right now is all the interior animosity. It's easy to do, it's easy to get caught up in that. I'll be talking to friends and find myself getting caught up in that. I think, "There's no reason for me to open my big mouth like that!" It's okay amongst friends, I guess, as long as it stays there but I feel it's unprofessional. It's okay, I suppose, if someone provokes it like there's columns in the *Comic Buyer's Guide* that are rather entertaining. Even then, some of those squabbles, you think, "Man, that's a professional low." I mean there's fans reading this stuff. What kind of impression are they getting from this? These people are suppose to be professionals. Some of them are rather eloquent, though.

CA: I enjoy the John Byrne letters and the *Peter David* letters.

Gary: Oh, yeah.

CA: They can put people off in the most articulate ways.

Gary: I hadn't read the *Hulk* in years until Peter David took it over. I'm thinking, "This guy can write!"

CA: Yeah, he's good. On your artistic technique, how do you go about it?

Gary: *Total Chaos.*

CA: You leap down with your non-photo blue pencil and go, "WWAAAH!!"

Gary: (Laughs) I haven't really developed a routine for it, yet...which is really aggravating. It drives me nuts! First, I sit down and read the script and see what things come to mind Except if it's a *Mike Baron* script which all the elements are already there. He's got all these doodles on this paper and you're trying to read the copy but there's all these word balloons next to it (laughs). It's the most interesting script I've seen in my life. But it's somewhat inhibiting because it affects you. I try to divorce myself from that and think about how I would like to do it.

CA: How many pages do you average a day?

Gary: Well, I never start one page and finish it. I jump around. I usually take a batch of about five pages at a time. I rough them out in blue pencil and if I don't have any idea for them at all I do it on copy paper and rarely a light box. Generally, I breakdown a page real loose. I do all of them real rough. Then I jump around an tighten them in places. Certain panels will catch me and I'll say, "Yeah! That works!"

CA: So, by jumping around like that you can distance yourself from the pages instead of just doing it straight through. Sometimes it helps to get away from something to have a more objective view.

Gary: It works for me. But, I'm still way too slow. I need to develop a technique.

CA: We're talking 8 to 10 hours a page?

Gary: Yeah, probably. Man, I can't believe how many pages John Byrne can churn out in a day! It bothers me.

CA: He can put out 5 a day, I hear.

Gary: How in the hell does he do that? And he's good, too. It always looks like John Byrne.

CA: It makes him happy. He makes money and he still loves doing it. Enough John Byrne hype!

Gary: (Laughs) Yeah.

CA: This is a standard question we always ask...what's your interests outside of comics?

Gary: I enjoy fine art. When I was at Fort Harrison I taught painting. I'd like to get back in the fine arts.

CA: So, you'd like to stay in the art field even when you're trying to get away from it?

Gary: Oh, yeah. There's no chance of getting away from it. I'd like to get into oil painting again. One of my favorite fine artists is *Ivan Albright* and his stuff is just incredible! I saw some of his original pieces in Chicago at the Art Institute. They're these overweight people with purple "cottage-cheese" skin, you know, and it's just great stuff!

CA: Sounds intense.

Gary: Man, it's excellent! I wouldn't mind getting back into that kind of thing. Maybe when I'm retired. Working for Jim I got a nice retirement package. I can still retire and have money!

CA: I doubt if that will be for a while, though.

Gary: No.

CA: I'd like to really see you make it big because you're stuff is great. You have the potential to be a comic book great.

Gary: Thanks! I'd like to see it, too. It all hinges on making the right choices, I think. One of the bad choices I made was having to turn down *The Incredible Hulk #400*. I hated that. It depressed me. I feel bad about that. Bobbie Chase called me up and told me *Dale Keown* had left to go to Image and she told me she needed 20 pages. I asked when they were due and she said within a month! I was like, "Man!" At first, I said yes because there was just no way I could turn that down. I even talked to some friends to help me out on backgrounds. I never used people to help me before but I thought for that I would have to. Then I was informed that I needed to have a major presentation done for a major department store chain on the Captain Cartoon stuff in a month! So, I had to call her Monday and tell her I couldn't do it after all. That'll be the one thing that will haunt me forever.

CA: They'll call you up next week with something else.

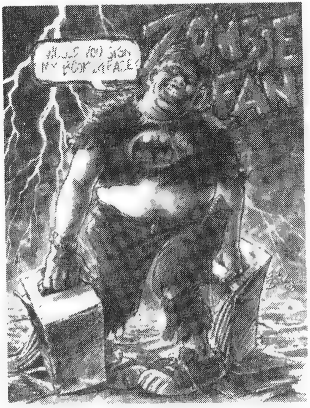
Gary: Well, I want to finish this DC job first but then...You know, another great thing about working for Jim is I get to work in this fabulous studio with an atrium and a glass work area and there's a work out room and everything. So, I come over here late and work on my comic stuff and sometimes Jim will stop by around eleven at night, he's a workaholic, and we were discussing this Hulk thing. He said, "I bet you thought you'd never find yourself in that position. Having to turn down the Hulk." I was like, "Yeah but...I don't like it!"

CA: Hulk #400...oh, well I'm not gonna say anymore.

Gary: (Laughs) Good.

CA: Thanks, Gary.

Gary: No problem.



Gary's idea of a Zombie Fan. Looks about right.

PREVIEW

ARROW

By Malibu Comics

WHAT'S SHE UP TO NOW?
I DON'T KNOW, BUT I STILL CAN'T GET A BEAD ON HER!
WATCH HER TO DEMISE IT'S A BOY!
I NEED TO BORROW YOU.
AH! OH BOY!
NOW I HAVE AN ENGINE!
I WON'T KEEP YOU LONG—JUST LONG ENOUGH TO GET THE CORPSE WE WANT I WANT!
SHIRAK!
MAGIC ARROW

THE ARROW?
OH, WELL... NOTHING LASTS FOREVER...
I THOUGHT I HAD LOCKED YOU AWAY FOR GOOD, DR. SHELDON.
TAKE SOME OF YOUR OWN ADVICE—LISTEN TO REASON. LET THE BOY GO, AND GIVE UP YOUR QUEST.
DON'T MAKE ME HAVE TO HURT YOU.
DON'T YOU MEAN HURT SOMEONE ELSE?
GET LOST, SHIRAK! THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU.

I WORK FOR PEOPLE WHO...IF I GET OUT OF HERE.
IT DOES NOT MATTER AS YOU SAVE THE BOY.
ATTACK
I THOUGHT THE JUDGE PUT HER AWAY FOR LIFE AFTER THAT LAST FIGHT OF OURS.
I GUESS I SHOULD HAVE KEPT MY EYE ON HER BETTER... ESPECIALLY WHERE DR. SHELDON IS CONCERNED.
CRUNK!
BLACKOUT
WEEP! BAD THING HAPPEN BEFORE.

COMICS NOW

by Jerry Smith

(This article was written before the release of Jim Lee's WildC.A.T.S., with which I was impressed. The artwork was dynamic, the story okay... I'm willing to give it a chance.)

This month I'd like to take a look at the Image books. I think I'm one of the few people who has no preconceived notions about comics. If a comic has a good storyline and decent art, chances are I'll like it, be it an outer space story, a super hero tale, or a slice of life book. So when Image Comics was announced, if anything, I was predispositioned to like the idea. I really didn't know what to expect, but there was no reason not to give the Image Universe thing a chance. I've tried everything Image has put on the market as of this writing, and, based on that and that alone, here's what I think.

Image Comics needs a few writers. Not that McFarlane, et.al. are the worst comic writers ever born, that's not the case. Their comics writing isn't worse than a lot of Marvel and DC books, which is where these guys came from. They can write comics, they just can't write great comics. What these guys need is a fresh perspective from someone who hasn't learned to write comic book stories by reading *Secret Wars I and II*. I totally support what the Image gang is doing, I applaud it. But guys, admit you need some help in the plotting/dialogue department.

The best Image comic so far is Todd McFarlane's *Spawn*. This isn't the best written comic on the market by far, but it's not bad either. McFarlane has made this book so weird I can't help but stick with it just to see what's going on. Although the dialogue is a bit overwritten, I'm willing to give McFarlane the chance to improve. The art is marvelous, from the air brushed covers to the gorgeous interiors. Todd has toned down a bit from the extremely cartoony style he used in *Spider-Man*.

The plot concerns a man who has apparently returned from the dead, equipped with a neat costume, nifty powers and little or no memory. Only we readers know that everytime he uses his as yet unknown powers, he loses a little bit of his life.

Of the Image books I've seen so far, *Spawn* is the only one I can imagine still being published a year and a half from now.

I was kind of surprised to enjoy the first issue of Erik

Larsen's *The Savage Dragon*. It looked kind of goofy on the stands, but I really enjoyed the story and art. The art on this book is really outstanding. I remember looking at Larsen's *Spider-Man* art last year and thinking how much he had improved since his *Megaton* days. His Dragon art is miles above that.

In Dragon, we have the use of the old memory loss plot device again, but it is used to a satisfying effect. In a flashback scene to the Dragon's origin, he wakes up in the middle of a burning field to find he's a huge green guy with a fin on his head. His memory is a total blank too. And I thought I had problems... When the cops find him, they do the logical thing. Put him in a state institution? No. Stick him in a zoo? No. No, they make him a cop.

The Savage Dragon is sort of a non-costumed super hero book. There are so many costumed hero books on the market, it's a refreshing change to find the star of a decent book, despite his uniqueness, is basically just a street cop. Plus, the art is phenomenal, the characters are interesting, and the plot left me wanting more. That's everything a good comic should do.

The worst comic to spring from Image is also the one that received the most publicity, Rob Liefeld's *Youngblood*. This book is just a mess. It seems like four new characters are introduced on every page, introduced and never referred to again. There is no plot, the book is one long fight scene, with characters being introduced, fighting, then moving on to the next page to do the same thing. The cast looks like every new mutant Liefeld drew at that other company, and no one--I mean NO ONE--has any semblance of a personality. I always know a comic is bad when the word balloons of all the characters could be switched and no one could tell the difference. Despite all the pretty pictures and the tribute to Jack Kirby in the second issue, I can say after going in with an open mind, *Youngblood* does not live up to the advance publicity.

The last Image character I've seen is Shadowhawk, in a sneak preview in, appropriately enough, *Youngblood #2*. I have to come clean and say that I've never been a huge fan of Jim Valentino's art or writing, except in the very funny and intentionally cartoony Normalman. From the five page preview of Shadowhawk, the character shows himself to be a shallow, armored, rip-off of Batman. The narration even declares that Shadowhawk will "take back the night", a promise the Dark Knight has made more than once. The art is not my cup of tea either. This book promises to be just another dark, violent viligante, which, if it featured good stories and

art, would be fine. Neither prospect looks very possible.

Two out of two isn't the greatest score for a new company trying to break into the market, even with the fan-favorite talent at Image. I'm looking forward to the rest of Image's line-up, including Jim Lee's *WildC.A.T.S.*, Dale Keown's *Pitt*, and other books like *Wetworks* and *Brigade*. I'm a bit surprised that Image hasn't tried to fill the niche that exists in the comics market; the intelligent comic. Valiant, while there is a certain sameness artwise to all of their material, fills the niche well. Image is passing that niche up all together and trying to compete with Marvel and DC head to head in the straight super hero market. I hope Rob Liefield learns soon that twenty pages of people in funny outfits beating each other up doesn't make a good comic. If sales prove that fans like the book, fine. I don't.

I've heard that some writers will be working on some Image titles in the future, most notably Chris Claremont. This is really the way for Image to go. Image, you've got the best artists in comics, now hire some of the best writers. You want to prove you can both draw and write. Well, hire the best and learn. I wish the Image

GRRR! FLASH SUITS. ENERGY WILL ONLY LAST FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES, BUT IT'LL GIVE 'EM THE FIRE-POWER OF A FREAKIN' BATTALION!
THEY'RE SHOOTING OUT OF CONTROL, DISINTEGRATING EVERYTHING IN SIGHT.
IF I WERE A NORMAL MAN I'D BE DEAD.
BUT I'M NEITHER.

creators every hope of success, and I look forward to future titles. But I just hope the creators are capable of putting egos out of the way and learning and growing as they go. It will be interesting to see where all the folks working for Image will be in eighteen months. I'm not saying there's no possibility for the company to succeed, on the contrary, they've got so much going for them it would be hard for them not to. It's just that when the fanfare dies down and the books are all number 10's and 12's instead of number 1's, will the teenage fan still be there to support the creators they loved on *Spider-Man*, *X-Force*, and *X-Men*? I can't wait to find out.

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Dave Sim: Live and Uncensored!

Cerebus-creator Dave Sim treated the attending retailers of the annual Diamond's Conference to a thought-provoking speech. Dave was kind enough to provide us with his draft from his speech and we present it to you here, live and uncensored!

I would like to thank Steve Geppi, Bill Schanes, Bill Neuhaus, Roger Fletcher and everyone else at Diamond comic Distributors for allowing me a little time here to talk to all of you in what I like to refer to as the Jiminy Cricket Hour; or half hour. I'd especially like to thank Will Eisner, last year's always let your Conscience be your guide speaker for keeping alive the idea of devoting a percentage of comic book store display space to independent and innovative and new comic book material. Mr. Eisner -- who keeps insisting that I should call Him Will; as he says, "Only guys who owe me money call me Re. Eisner:. Since what I owe him; what we all owe him is much more than money, I will continue to call him Mr. Eisner -- Mr. Eisner was a special guest at the Miami stop on the U.S.. Tour at the beginning of last month. When I managed tc tear myself away from the line-up of people waiting for autographs and head-sketches for a few minutes to chat with him, I made a special point of telling him how much of an impact his speech last year to this gathering had; how many retailers had come up and told me through the course of the first five months of the Tour -- most especially at the Diamond Warehouses I've visited-- how much his talk had meant to them and to their businesses. Very sad look crossed his features and he said in a defeated tone that is very uncharacteristic of Mr. Eisner, "Dave, they come up and tell you 'What a Great Speech, way to go', but when it comes down to it they never change a damn thing." It takes a great deal for me to disagree with Mr. Eisner, so great is the respect I have for him and for his accomplishments in our field, but disagree with him I did, and vehemently. I arranged for him to meet with Gary Colabuono of Chicago's *Moondog's* comic store chain and with a number of other concerned retailers at the Capital City Trade Show in Madison which we both attended the next day. What was supposed to be an informal 'get-acquainted' meeting turned into eight hours of ' intense and frank discussions' as they say in the world of high-level diplomacy--by all accounts, anyway; I wasn't there. There is change going on; fundamental change, profound change, positive change, lasting change. Not all of your stores are changing for the better as Mr. Eisner and myself would see it. On a percentage basis, maybe ten percent of you are taking direct and concerted action to stem the tide of super-hero saturation. And for those people, only a small percentage of their store is changing; again, maybe ten percent. That's why Mr. Eisner was so successful with his speech last year...because he didn't ask for a sweeping change which was impossible to implement. His suggestion was practical and within the means of everyone to put into effect immediately; because it demanded more a change of focus, a change effect immediately; because it demanded more a change of focus, a change of attitude and change originates. He spoke as someone whose creative endeavors represent a fraction of a fraction of a traction of one percent of your day-to-day business; but whose stature and reputation, whose dedication to our medium, and whose contribution over the last five decades-plus is beyond dispute, beyond debate and whose words, therefore, so carefully chosen and delivered from his heart, had an impact far beyond market share, far beyond sales figures, far beyond what's Hot and what's Not.

So, now it's my turn.

There are a lot of you here today who expect me to rant and rave and foam at the mouth, to stand up here and tell you what scum you are, to bitch about the glut of garbage in your stores, to call you marvel toadies and over-grown fan boys, low-brow anti-intellectuals, panderers to the lowest common denominator, purveyors of hackwork, patrons of the infantile, the fourth rate and the mediocre. There is no question in my mind that a newly-emerging medium needs a world-class cynic, a purist observer, to chastise, to denigrate and to cast aspersions of all efforts save his own, but one of those is really all that you need

and we already have Gary Groth.

So, I'll leave the criticisms aside and, instead, speak positively to you in the time allotted to me. Whether in my stories or in my life, I always try to see things as they are, as opposed to seeing the portrayal of those things. Because if you can see reality shorn of wishful-thinking and self-deception, then changing that reality becomes possible.

Five months ago, at the first stop on the Tour, in San Francisco, *Alpha Flight 106* had just shipped and was sold out in virtually every store in the Bay area within hours. Last week, in Minneapolis, at the Great Eastern Convention, I saw a copy with a price tag of thirty dollars. Many of you will cringe and groan inwardly when I say that. There is an embarrassment in the direct market about the investment/speculation side of our business; a shame that comes naturally to the liberal-minded and the idealistic; a sense of participation in something unsavory and greedy. I don't see it that way. I never have and I never will. Far from something seedy and under-handed, it is something extraordinary; something very powerful and of great value. I could ask everyone in this room what they would, or are selling *Alpha Flight 106* for. Six dollars. Ten Dollars. Fifteen dollars. Twelve fifty. Three dollars. Some of you would price it according to its *Wizard* magazine listing; some according to *Comics Values Monthly*, some according to the *Overstreet Update*, some at half what the guy down the street is charging; some at twice what the guy down the street is charging. What is extraordinary about this is the autonomy you have in choosing your own price. Each person who owns a store controls reality in that store. You don't have to phone head office to ask how much to charge for *Alpha Flight 106*, you don't receive instructions to raise or lower your price from some distant authority. There is no securities and Exchange Commission for back issue comic book sales. It's a good thing, too, because a lot of you would be behind bars right now. For all practical purposes, our stores each function as a comic book stock exchange. There are as many stock exchanges as there are comic store owners. Some of you have *Cerebus* shares which are trading at twenty-five cents in a back-issue assortment bin. Another store, another stock exchange will have that book on the wall, sealed in plastic, alongside other blue chip investments for eight or ten dollars. Sixty-thousand copies of *Free Cerebus* shipped in February of this year, representing a three-to-one ratio of copies in existence to the number of Cerebus fans: a market of twenty-thousand people chasing sixty-thousand copies. Larry Marder informs me that there are stores in Chicago selling *Free Cerebus* for six dollars. Supply and demand does not apply in the comic book marketplace. Supply and desire does. You want it, it's six bucks. You don't want it, someone else will get it for three bucks down the street. If they are a Cerebus fan/collector/investor and it is the only copy they've ever seen, the odds are they will pay the six bucks. Desire overcomes reason.

Viewed one way; the way that causes most of you to be embarrassed by this side of your business, this is grasping, swinish, piggy capitalism. Viewed another way, the way I see it, it represents business confidence, optimism in our future, a tangible manifestation in hard currency of a belief in ourselves and what we, comic book creators, publishers, distributors, warehouse personnel, retailers, fans, collectors, readers and investors have built from nothing into a one hundred million dollar a year industry in less than three decades.

Will *Alpha Fight 106* be selling for one hundred dollars in a year's time? Fifty dollars? Five dollars? That's not important. What is important is that a comic book you paid less than a dollar for is able to bring you a sale of five dollars or eight dollars or ten dollars less than six months after publication. That is a stock market which makes the Dow Jones on its most bullish days look like a timed spinster with her life's savings stashed in her sock drawer. That money helps pay your rent, it puts food on your table, and, over the long term it lets you expand, it lets you grow, it lets you modernize and it gives you more money to invest.

Now, before I talk to you about investment, I'd like to share a few observations I have been able to make over the past five months of travelling around the Great Republic and seeing the direct market environment, both wholesale and retail, up close, live and in person. Put very simply, comics is a now environment. We've been moving toward that situation over the last two years and here we now find ourselves. As you sit here today, you have Thursday on your mind; last Thursday's shipment, which can be broken down into WHAT CAME IN, WHAT SHOULD'VE COME IN, WHAT FINALLY CAME IN, WHAT PARTLY CAME IN, WHAT CAME IN and LEFT, THANK GOD, OVER THE WEEKEND and WHAT CAME IN, HASN'T BUDGED

IN THREE DAYS and has QUARTER PILE WRITTEN ALL OVER IT in NEON LETTERS. You also have next Thursday on your mind. The ship week that you made all your decisions on two months ago. Four days from now, that Thursday will BE NOW. It will be followed by a weekend where you will barely make ends meet or where you will come up a little short. Or it will be a weekend where you will have a little gravy left after the meat and potatoes are gone. Or it might be a week when you'll have a whole gravy boat full of gravy for yourself. You also have a Thursday in August on your mind and you're playing the same guessing game with that one. Week-in and week-out, month-in and month-out, year-in and year-out, the same guessing game. You learn from your mistakes, you listen to your gut (or, in some cases, you listen to your ulcer) and you play that guessing game where it is always Now and it is always Two Months FROM NOW.

Reorders don't exist

It's time for us all to be quite honest about that.

Reorders don't exist or they exist in such minuscule quantities that they might as well not exist. You could use another fifty of this title or another twenty of that title. Too bad. Because-in-a-Now-Environment, Now-is-Now-and-last-week-might-as-well-be-five-years-ago. Bump your orders on the title for two months from now and cross your fingers that the team who did issue one will still be doing it at issue five.

Now. And two months from now. A guessing game of hits and misses. And as the volume of material increases, the sheer number of first issues and new companies and new lines and new merchandise, we are moving into a junk bond phase in your stock exchange. In a traditional marketplace dictated to by supply and demand and government regulation marketplace dictated to by supply and demand and government regulation, this would be a disaster. In your stock exchanges, it just means there is more pressure to order conservatively, to sell out in shorter period of time; to keep inventory under control and, if possible, to eliminate inventory completely. It is a movement towards Now as an Absolute. If seventy-five per cent of your order is gone by the weekend, it's a Hit. If you still have seventy-five per cent of your order by next Thursday, it's a dog, it's a stiff. Just as there is no regulation on what you can charge for back issues, there is no regulation of the amount of new material being produced and solicited; and that production is increasing exponentially from Marvel and DC down to the kid in his basement who saved up enough money from his paper route to pay a printing bill. Where twenty-five percent of that material consisted of number one's five years ago, today, Now and Two months from now, that percentage is increasing, also, exponentially. At the rate we are going, two years from now, no company will produce a second issue of anything and we will have reached a state of absolute now where everything is a guessing game, and nothing endures. You can already see it in the proliferation of mini-series and the shortening of those mini-series to a point where you are having to order a complete story, sight unseen.

At that point we will have passed from the junk bond phase into the lottery ticket phase. One out of every hundred comic books you will purchase will be listed as having a value of twenty-five dollars the following month in *Wizard* and *Comics Values Monthly*. But the twenty-five dollar hit won't stretch far enough to cover the inventory you are carrying of the ninety-nine misses. But the game still won't end. Comic book companies will come and go in a matter of months or weeks instead of years; only to be replaced, Hydra-lake, by two more comic book companies, each soliciting ten number one issues. Your stores will be expanding, the volume of material you carry will expand, everything will be going faster and faster and faster, but, then rivers speed up considerably when they're heading for the waterfall.

Contrary to popular belief, not everyone lost their fortune on junk bonds. The people who recognized them for the lunatic guessing game that they were; who saw how drastically over-valued they were, got into the junk bond market as it was rising faster and faster, sold them when they reached a fever pitch, and used the profits to buy long-term, solid, blue chip investments; that weren't as flashy; that weren't as exciting; but which had one indisputable trait which the junk bonds lacked; dependability in the long term.

There is nothing wrong with lottery tickets for the matter, as long as it's the right lottery ticket that you invest in.

Which brings me, as I promised a few moments ago, to the subject of investment. Investment not in the absolute now, not in two months from now, not in six months from now or a year from now or two years from now, but in long-term, dependable, productive investment. Because there is one major drawback to a now environment that is growing exponentially and that

is, that by its very nature, it inhibits, impedes and ultimately destroys any possibility of long-term growth and investment. This is particularly true in the case of the comic book environment and what the industry is based on is creativity; writers and artists who are, like you, human beings. When I began Cerebus in 1977, the total orders for the first issue came to two thousand copies; five hundred copies purchased by Jim Friel, five hundred copies by Harry Kremer and one thousand copies by Phil Seuling. That first issue showed a profit of about one hundred and fifty dollars. Issues 2 through 5 sold an identical amount to same three individuals. Each, again, earned a profit of about one hundred and fifty dollars. By selling copies individually at comic book conventions, selling the original artwork for twenty dollars a page, selling convention sketches and doing advertising word in the month where I wasn't drawing Cerebus, I was able to keep going. Today with the ordering policies that are nearly universal; where you order you highest numbers on a number one issue and then cut your orders very dramatically on each successive issue, I am reasonably certain, that had I started Cerebus today, it would not have lasted past thanksgiving of this year.

I am not saying that you should order every self-published black and white comic book that comes out because one day it will turn into the next Cerebus. I want only to make you aware that whether a book is published by Marvel or published by that kid who saved up the money from his paper route, it has been written and drawn and lettered by a human being or by a team of human beings.

There is no question that the single largest anchor that is holding the direct market back from fulfilling its nearly limitless potential is the unreliability of the creators to produce their work on time and to meet their commitment to a publishing schedule. It is one of the biggest reasons I decided to do Cerebus in the first place. Every small publisher I worked for spent more time talking about what they were going to do than they did doing it. I decided that I would produce three issues of a comic book. I would keep the format the same, I would keep the title character the same, I would keep the approach the same and I would do it as I thought it should be done. But, most importantly, I was going to make sure it came out when I said it was going to come out.

There is no reason for any comic book to be off schedule; there are only excuses.

And excuses don't pay your bills and excuses don't help us to move forward as an environment and an industry. Time and time again, I tell creators, whether they are self- publishing or being published by someone else, that if they can't establish a schedule and stick to it, they are no longer part of the solution, they-are-the-problem.

In their defense, I will say, again, that they are human beings.

And I will ask you to picture what the effect is on a human being who is idealistic, who is enthusiastic, who is delivering his work on time, and who is pouring his heart, his blood, his sweat and his many, many tears into a creative endeavor, to see the orders for his first issue come in at, say, five thousand copies. He sees this as a foundation upon which he can build a future for himself, for his collaborators, for his spouse and for his family. And the orders come in for number two and they are three thousand copies. On number three and they are eight hundred copies. His spirit is broken and, humiliated, depressed and embarrassed, he crawls away to lick his wounds.

People ask me what happened to *Big Numbers* number three.

That's what happened to Big Numbers number three.

It is more complicated than that, of course, and much of it has to do with Alan Moore and Bill Sienkiewicz and human beings and parts of their lives which have no place in a talk of this kind. But I can tell you that the central reason, and the reason you were the biggest part of, was the massive drop in orders between number one and number two. It was viewed by those two human beings as a massive vote of non-confidence in the creators who had given you *Watchmen* and *Elektra: Assassin* less than a year before.

Closer to home for many of you, there's the experience of Todd McFarlane on the adjectiveless Spider-Man. I can only speculate what the orders were like on his final issue, but it doesn't take a mathematical whiz to figure out that it was a minuscule percentage of what the first issue sold.

And it's about to happen again.

I, for one, choose to believe Todd when he says that he wants to stick with *Spawn*; that he would like someday to be drawing issue fifty, issue seventy-five. He is young and he's still learning his craft, but his first issue is certainly a good deal more accomplished and professional than was the first issue of Cerebus. But if you order *Spawn* the way that you ordered the adjectiveless Spider-Man, the

odds are that it won't be around at issue ten. And then, I would guess, Todd would be forced to join in the guessing game; doing two issue and three issue mini-series, or producing six different number one issues next year of six different characters and instead of having invested in the future of Todd McFarlane and the future of *Spawn*, you will have made of him another issuer of lottery tickets.

Bone by Jeff Smith is a brilliant comic book. It is self-published and he is currently working on issue five. The first issue came out last July and he is shooting for a bi-monthly schedule, so that will put him just slightly off his intended target. Colleen is a little behind that on *A Distant Soil*. Martin Wagner is moving as fast as he can to get caught up on his commitment to *Hepcats*. I know that if you would all maintain your orders on those books, it could go a long way towards assisting them in these efforts. If you increased your orders by even one or two copies...well...let me put it this way. You know how you feel after a weekend when nothing seems to be moving in your stores. You do the work you have to do, deep inside you remain committed to your store and to the comic book medium, but those days are nothing compared to the end of a weekend when three hot sellers are just flying off the shelves; when a book that you thought might be slow sells out by Friday. That boost is critical to anyone working in any field; but, as we move closer and closer to absolute now, it is no longer happening for writers and artists. It would be a small investment to pick four titles that you want to see succeed, that you, personally, like and to order three or five or ten or fifty more copies of them.

Because when it comes down to it, you are the ones who decide if a comic book lives or dies.

If you make it an unshakable rule that you order heavy on a number one and then cut your orders as fast as you can on everything, then, ultimately, everything dies and it dies sooner rather than later. Reorders do not exist.

When a customer asks if you have the latest Cerebus and you say it sold out, but you have it on reorder, you are ignoring the reality in which you find yourselves. There is only Now and two months from now. If you don't increase your orders for two months from now, you are, whether you believe it or not, turning away business. And you are, whether you believe it or not, killing comic book titles.

Because that customer has a life of his or her own

They are not like the thirteen-year-olds who haunt your store on Thursday afternoon and who will shop at your competitor's store instead if they find out he gets his books two hours sooner. That customer will ask about Cerebus a couple of times, he'll realize that yours is not the sort of store that supports Cerebus and he'll go elsewhere. Or, he'll order a subscription from us; he'll order the phone books from us.

As strange as it may sound, Cerebus is really all that you've got.

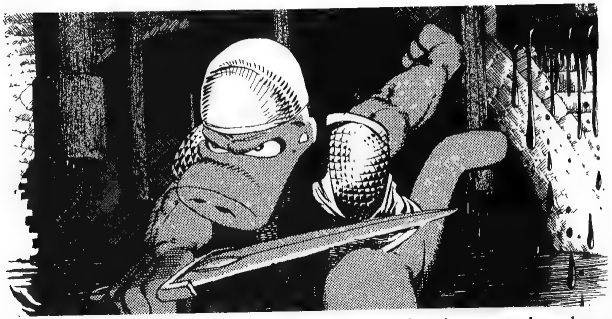
You have a problem with the big two, because they can't keep a creative team on a book longer than six months or a year. You know how important the creative team is to the sales on a book. If you invest six months or a year building a title into a strong seller and the creator or creators are forced off of it or are tempted elsewhere, that investment of your time and energy has been largely wasted. With most of the independents, the creators stick around on the title, but they seem hard-pressed to put out two issues in the course of a year. You end up building interest in a title, spending time and money and energy getting your customers excited about it and then spend fifty weeds out of the year saying "I don't know when it's coming out" and then two weeks out of the year saying, "it sold out as soon as it came in...but we've got it on reorder."

We're not building anything that way.

I'm always amazed at the number of retailers who ask me, "When's the Cerebus film coming out?", As if this would be a good thing for the comic book environment. If I sold the film rights to Cerebus and the merchandising rights to Cerebus, the same thing would happen to Cerebus that happened to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Some thing that was created in the comic book environment, for the comic book environment would be taken over by Hollywood and the large chain department stores. It would become a one or two year fad and you would see virtually none of the profits. Anything that Cerebus was on or in could be sold much more cheaply a few blocks from your store. I'd make a few million dollars that I don't need and I'd have to live for the rest of my life with parents coming up to me and saying "You created Cerebus? The purple one with the white hair who eats pastrami sandwiches and says 'Hey, Dude' all the time? My kids love that show."

In the here and Now environment, you can count on Cerebus, you can count on Sandman, Usagi Yojimbo, Groo.

I almost hate to say that



last name out loud, you expect several chandeliers and half the ceiling to come crashing down on your head.

You know that what you need is comic books that ship on time, comic books that have readily identifiable characters that are fan favorites; you need the creator of those characters producing the book and you need them to make a commitment in the long term.

My commitment to you is that Cerebus number one was sold exclusively in comic book stores and in March 2004, right on schedule, issue three hundred of Cerebus will be available exclusively in comic book stores.

I don't want to turn this into an ad for Cerebus.

Believe me, if there was another monthly comic book by the same creator that had come out for fourteen and a half years and was committed to another eleven years and nine months, I'd be more than happy to talk about it. I'd probably order a hundred copies myself.

When retailers tell me that they don't think anyone will ever match Cerebus as an achievement; that no one will ever again commit themselves to a project of its size and scope ever again in the history of comic books; I think they're very much surprised when I disagree with them and, further, that I pray often they're wrong.

Because what comic books mean to me; what it means to the optimistic and dedicated part of you; the part of you that made you open a comic book store in the first place against all the odds and forces at work against you; what it means to us is exactly the day-in and day-out dedication that we need now as we've needed it before. The dedication which formed the first thirty-eight issues of Spiderman, the dedication that allowed Mary Wolfman and Gene Colan and Tom Palmer to do seventy issues of *Tomb of Dracula*, the dedication that kept Stan Lee and Jack Kirby on the *Fantastic Four* for almost a decade; the nearly unimaginable dedication that kept Carl Barks laboring in virtual obscurity for a longer period than that. The dedication that keeps Sergio and Mark and Stan producing Groo, month after month, without fail and without let-up.

That's what comic books mean.

That's why we keep going. That is us, all of us together, at our very BEST.

As the Absolute now point approaches and engulfs us, and as you are forced by circumstances beyond anyone's control to kill everything within a few months of its birth, it is up to you to decide who the handful of long-term survivors will be; who will be the exceptions that reach issue forty, issue sixty, issue one hundred.

Between *Wizard* magazine, the emergence of Image publishing (which I have great confidence is just the first of what will be many super-hero comic companies that will be founded by each new generation of super-star Marvel creators) and the popularity and bankability of characters like the Punisher, Wolverine, Lobo and Youngblood, the prospects for the next two years of the junk bond-lottery ticket market are very good, indeed; amounting very nearly to a license for each of your stock exchanges to print money.

How you invest those profits is, of course, entirely up to you.

I, along with Colleen Doran, artist/writer/publisher of *a Distant Soil* and Martin Wagner, artist/writer/publisher of *Hepcats*, look forward to meeting you in the Exhibit Room after lunch.

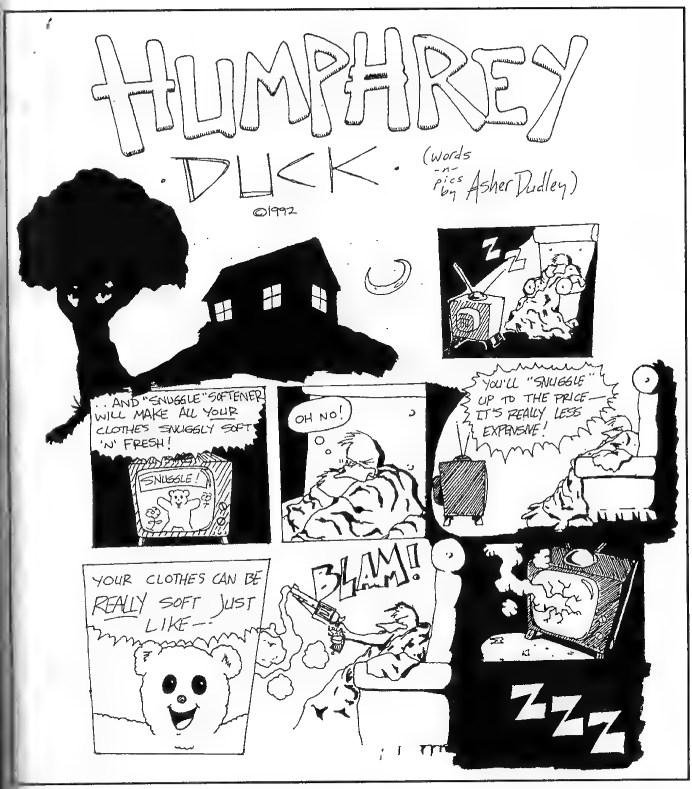
Thank you for you're time and your attention.

SUPERMAN or The Hulk
Who's Number One?

by Jerry Smith

This month's cover gets my vote for cover of the month, of any publication anywhere. No offense intended to Mr. Kent, but that is one mean looking Hulk pressing him up against the wall. I can't help wonder what Supes did to tick him off. Probably asked him if "Hulk would smash." You don't get in the intelligent Hulk's face if you can help it, and it looks like someone had to find that out the hard way. Although the cover was done for fun, it unintentionally brings up a good point: Superman and the Hulk are the two best written characters presently in comics. It's odd, ten years ago, I never could have imagined writing those words. A decade ago, Superman was stuck in a seemingly endless cycle of bland plots and uninspired artists. The Hulk was a dumb, green, one-trick-pony, with any hope of new or innovative stories a long time gone. What happened? Amazingly, it was one man who ultimately pushed both characters into being something that would capture fan's imaginations again: John Byrne. In the mid 80's, even sleeping giant DC Comics realized that their flagship character, being almost a half century old, was not pulling his own weight anymore. The Superman books at the time were bland and listless, the character had the powers of a god, and no one was really interested in writing or reading about him. So hired gun John Byrne came aboard, along with Marv Wolfman, to revitalize Superman and his world. Byrne, Wolfman, DC editor Mike Carlin and a slew of new artists set out to update (not totally change) the Superman Universe. In Man of Steel #1, Superman, Clark Kent and the entire supporting cast of the Superbooks were dragged, kicking and screaming, into the late 80's. Clark Kent was no longer the goofy bumbler of the comics and movies. He no longer wore that one annoying blue suit. He was an intelligent, well dressed novelist who reported hard news for the revamped Daily Planet. Lois Lane was a brainless damsel-in-distress in the past, but now she was a three-dimensional professional. The same goes for the rest of the cast. Everyone has their own personalities and lives, and I very much enjoy looking in on them each month. Currently there are four Superman books on the market, Superman, Adventures of Superman, Superman: The Man of Steel, and

Action Comics. The most amazing thing about these books is, they're all great. Mike Carlin has done the impossible job of coordinating all four plotlines and assuring that they actually make sense. Roger Stern is having the time of his life as a superscribe, and Jerry Ordway, Dan Jurgens, and recent addition Louise Simonson write equally as exciting material. The art is good to great on all the Superbooks, but Jackson Guice's stuff has to be some of the best Superman art ever done. His Supergirl is one of the sexiest women in comics. Here's to a lot more stories featuring Supergirl. For my money, there is no place in mainstream comics that superheroes are being done better than the Superman titles. Or is there? Don't forget, we started out discussing both Superman and the Hulk. What about the jolly green wonder? Once again, it was John Byrne who set events in motion to change the Hulk back into an interesting character. John set the groundwork with interesting stories about the Hulk and Bruce Banner seperating, but most of the credit for massive change goes to Peter David. David, always a writer who rebels against the status quo, realized that sales were so blah on the Hulk (with the exception of Byrne's tenure), that no matter what he did it couldn't hurt sales (I love this attitude, I wish Marvel had it with all their comics). When David started a new storyline, it went something like this: As the story opens, the Hulk has changed from being green to having gray skin. He is living in a Las Vegas Casino/Hotel and making his living as Joe Fixit, a bouncer for the casino owner, underworld boss Michael Berengetti. He is capable of intelligent thought, reason, and can say more than "Hulk will smash." Huh? It took a lot of guts for David to open a story like that. The fun thing was following the storyline for the next few months to see what the heck was going on. Why did the Hulk have gray skin? How could he string two sentences together and pronounce words with more than one syllable? And how the heck did he wind up as a Vegas bouncer? The answers were as fun as the questions, which doesn't happen much in any medium, especially comics. What was great about this Hulk was that he had a definite attitude. He was mean (but fair enough) and didn't take crap off of anyone. He didn't coddle supervillians when they came to Vegas looking to start up trouble. What he did to the Grey Gargoyle still echos in my mind as a cruel and nasty, but deserving, fate. This was not the stupid but gentle green Hulk, but an altogether different character springing from little Bruce Banner. Where was the old green Hulk, you ask? The answer is one of the best hooks of David's writing. Greenjeans was lurking in the new Hulk's mind, waiting for a chance to "smash" his way out. The conflict of Gray Hulk/Green Hulk/Banner made for some of the best writing of Peter David's career and definitely the best Hulk stories ever. Currently, the three personalities of Banner have merged to form a green Hulk. He still has an attitude, and doesn't take crap off of anyone, but he's less nasty than the gray Hulk. He's more of a hero than he's ever been, but don't let that fool you. Don't cross him. Or Hulk will smash. So who's better, the Hulk or Superman? Supes outsells the green guy, due to having four books on the market to Hulk's one. Supes is probably stronger, but that's a matter of opinion. Superman would say he was stronger, then the Hulk would pin him up against the wall. Just look at the cover of this month's issue. In the end, it doesn't matter who's number one. Just buy books with each character and enjoy them. You can't go wrong with any comic featuring these two characters. Who's better? Decide for yourself. I never thought I would say this, but Superman and the Hulk are the two most enjoyable characters in mainstream comics today.



Welcome to the first installment of Asher Dudley's *Humphrey The Duck.* Write in and let us know what you think of Asher, Humphrey and the hard-hitting political and pietistic views that Asher offers in this neo-symbolic sequential masterpiece.

No, really. Write us and let us know what you think and maybe we can prompt Asher to send us more.

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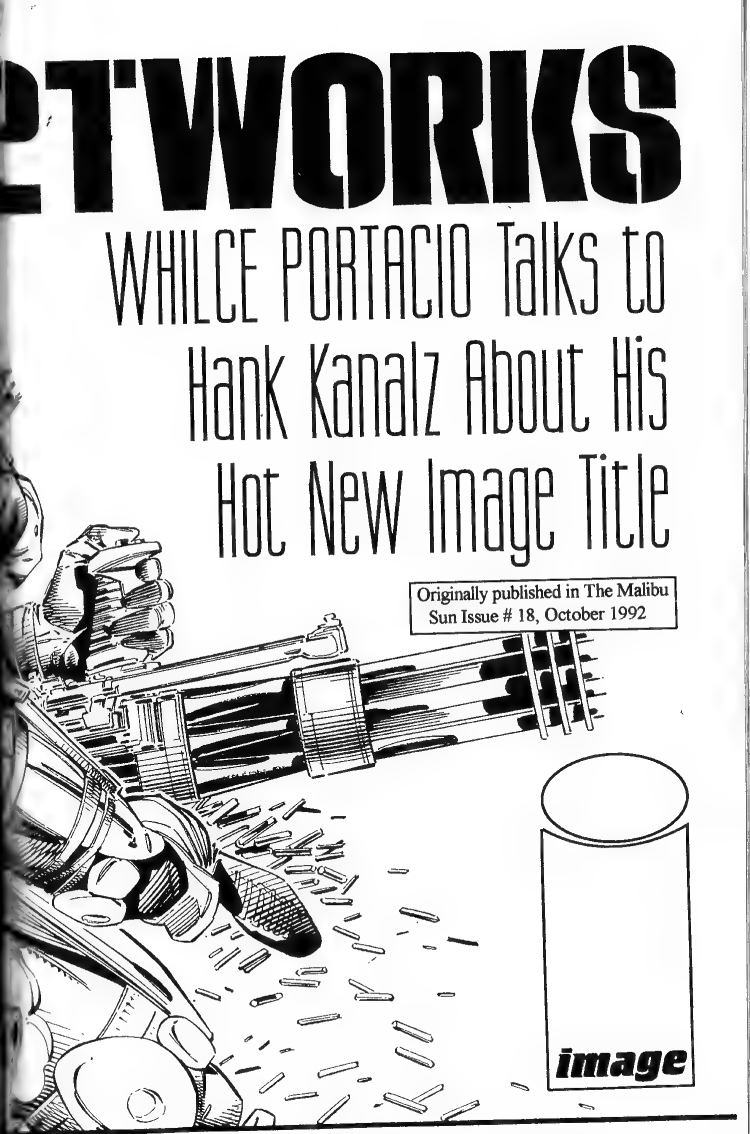
TWORKS

WHILCE PORTACIO Talks to Hank Kanalz About His Hot New Image Title

Originally published in The Malibu Sun Issue # 18, October 1992



Whilce Portacio first came to the attention of comic fans as the inker on Art Adams' Longshot. *Since then, he's had memorable stints on* Alpha Flight, Punisher, X-Factor, *and of course,* Uncanny X-Men. *Whilce's new Image book,* Wetworks, *debuts this October, closing the first wave of Image books created and produced by the founding creators. During yet another visit to Homage studios in San Diego, I had the opportunity to corner Whilce and ask him about his involvement with Image, Homage, and* Wetworks.

Hank Kanalz: Each member of Homage has a story behind how they met the others. What's your story?
Whilce Portacio: It was around 1984, and I had just landed the *Longshot* inking job and I was inking *Alien Legion*. I needed an assistant because I couldn't handle the deadlines, even back then! (laughter) I thought about my friend Scott (Williams), who I've known since high school in Hawaii.

I was a freshman, he was a senior—he was actually the one who got me interested in comics. He showed me all the Neal Adams comics! So Scott was working with me; shortly after that, I landed the *Alpha Flight* job. And at the end of that, Jim (Lee) came on to the book.

My last work on *Alpha Flight* was actually Jim's first work on the book. And the rest, as they say, is history!

HK: What's it like for you, working at the studio?
WP: Well, Homage is made up of Marc Silvestri, Lee, Williams, plus we now have Joe Rosas, Mike Heisler, and Brandon Choi. For me, it's a perfect situation where I have all these creative people in one spot. The other day, we were working on the final version of the *Wetworks* logo. I had Mike Heisler (letterer) and Joe Rosas (colorist) and Scott Williams, all huddled together.

Since lettering is Mike's expertise, he gave us options we wouldn't have thought of—and I would come up with a concept that Mike could either implement or tell me whether or not it would work. Color will play a big part in the book, so Joe gave his two cents. It's the most collaborative form of creation possible!

We were working on something entirely as a team. As a creator, that's one of the best feelings—you have an idea and you can see it happen right away, and the way you want it done. We all feed off of each other. And this studio dynamic extends even further with the Image guys. We're linked together by the phone and the faxes, plus we get together when we can. It's a true creative collaboration.

HK: You've said in other interviews that you would stay at Marvel for a while and work on an Image project when you had the time. What prompted you to change your mind? Why leave Marvel and work with Image full time?
WP: It finally seemed to be the right time!

HK: Well, you are considered one of the original "Founding Members" of Image, right?
WP: Yeah, I am. Almost by default, thanks to the way things work here at Homage. We do almost everything by committee here at the studio. When things started up about Image, we all talked about it and decided to do it. So yes, I became a member of Image whether I wanted to or not (laughter). Just kidding!

HK: So creative freedom is the biggest draw to working with Image? And I always say, working with Image, since you really don't have a boss!
WP: Yeah, I'd say that's it. The freedom. Image is really a creative coalition. Image is the only thing around where you own everything and control everything, but you share the same universe with everybody. As creative as everybody is, someone else will always be pushing that envelope and creating something better. And you can mingle together and not lose anything!

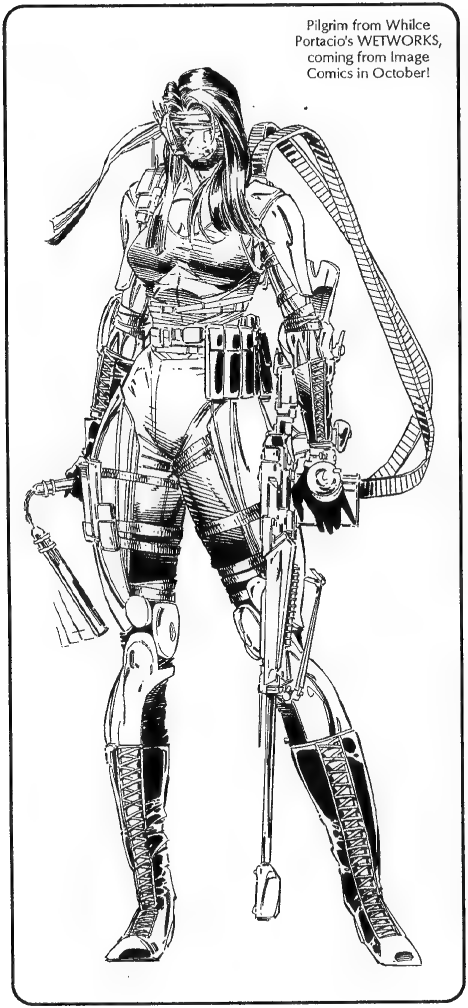
HK: When your involvement was first announced, you were going to work on a project with Chris Claremont called The Huntsmen. *What happened with that?*
WP: I always wanted to work with Chris, since I first started inking! I really like the emotion involved with his characters. No matter what, I'll always like his work, and although my first project with Image isn't with Chris, that doesn't mean we'll never work together again.

When you're going to put your reputation out on a limb, you want to work on something that is comfortable to you. It's something you can feel for and therefore give 200%. At the same time Chris was proposing *The Huntsmen*, I was developing a project with Brandon Choi. As time went on, that concept became *Wetworks*. So the appeal of doing my own concept was just too great to pass up!

HK: And that means you may still work with Claremont on a

HANK KANALZ last interviewed Marc Silvestri for the August Malibu Sun *(#16).*

Jester and Claymore from Whilce Portacio's WETWORKS, coming from Image Comics in October!



Pilgrim from Whilce Portacio's WETWORKS, coming from Image Comics in October!

Image project?
WP: Right! It's not a judgement call of any kind. It's more a matter of timing.

HK: Timing's probably why no one knows much about Wetworks.
WP: Well, yeah. In early December (1991), I got a call from the Image guys asking if I wanted to join in with the rest of them. They hadn't really formalized anything yet, but they were asking if I would want to do some independent work. At that point, I really hadn't thought of it. I was just warming up to *Uncanny* and to Bishop. So I told the guys I'd think about it.

For about a month and a half, I was in the Philippines on vacation. When I came back at the end of January, this group was an entity called Image Comics. The coalition formed when I was gone. I had to make a decision fast. Imagine the shock—I had left the country, and when I came back, there was a new status quo! My first reaction was, "Oh, I should go with these guys, but let me think about it."

HK: It's a pretty important decision to make.
WP: Yeah, it was a big career move! After a couple of months of everybody telling me about the pros and cons, the appeal of full control was most evident. As a creator, you rely on your instincts, and the appeal of relying purely on my own instincts was irresistible.

By March, even though it had been announced I would be working with Image and probably Chris Claremont, I made my final decision. It was pretty much a foregone conclusion that I would join up, but it was a matter of *me* knowing that I would join. I don't like jumping into any-

thing, or being pushed into anything. So I gave my notice then, and it was an amicable split with Marvel.

But, because of my timing—that's why my project hasn't been getting much press.

HK: So is Wetworks *a concept you've had for a long time, or is it something that you created specifically to do with Image?*
WP: Well, what it is now, with hindsight, is a military team that I always wanted to do since I was a child. But the actual details and substance of *Wetworks* came about through the collaboration, the arguments, and the hair pulling sessions with my friend Brandon Choi (co-writer of *WILDC.A.T.S*). He's co-writing this with me, and we share, right down the middle, the *Wetworks* concept. But I've always wanted to do a futuristic military team.

HK: Tell us a little about the general concept behind Wetworks. *What does the title mean?*
WP: "Wetworks" is CIA slang for when operatives get into close-quarters combat. The operatives get wet from all the blood from the killing. Therein is the title—they are doing wet work. From there, we established a team to go with the name. I like the concept of humans rising to super-human proportions. That's why I like Silver Surfer and Deathlok so much. Although they had things done to them to make them super-human, they are still men at heart and they act that way. These things were done against their will, and they survived.

Wetworks is a special operations unit that is highly trained for combat. They are privy to new high tech weaponry and hardware. So you have people with the skill, but they're still human. If they are hit by a bullet, they would be wounded or killed.

So we had to come up with the concept of a form of bullet-proof protection. Imagine, if you will, a sentient liquid metal life-form that could wrap itself around a host (in this case a human being). It could monitor all bio-systems because of its symbiotic relationship with the host. At the same time, it makes the human host impervious to whatever is out there—bullets, laser beams, whatever. It can also sense heat profiles, so if someone fired a bullet at you, you'd be able to see the profile of the bullet as it approached you. And the heat profile would get brighter as it gets closer. This symbiotic protection would let you know when there was something incoming, and therefore protect you and itself. So now these guys who are well trained can withstand almost any amount of punishment.

HK: So they've risen to super-human proportions?
WP: Right, but they still keep their humanity. These suits can not only wrap around the host, but can also seep into their skin. Instead of having the shiny-looking protection, you have a human-looking person, but one who can get bruised or gashed. We're going to explore the suits more in the series—what happens with prolonged exposure to the suits, can they control the suits, can they get the suits off? There's a lot to explore with just that tiny aspect of the book!

HK: The mini-series is the origin of the team. Tell us about the team dynamics.
WP: What we created was a four-squad team. You have two Strike Teams, each made up of two people. Strike Team One is made up of Dozer and Grail. Strike Team Two is made up of Jester and Claymore.

HK: Claymore? Like the mines?
WP: Yeah—he has some strapped to his legs, so if he's in close quarters, he can set the mine off. Since he's protected by the suit, he can do some serious damage to his opponent!

There's a Recon Unit, made up of one person, Pilgrim. And then there is the Command and Communications Unit, with Dane (team leader) and Mother. Mother is half human, half cyborg, which is why she's communications. All these people are linked up with voice communicators. There are two modes you can be in—open channel, or voice activated. The problem with voice activated mode is that sometimes you cut off the beginning and end of the communications, and only one person can use the channel at a time. With open channels, you have a lot of chatter going on. These guys have open channels—and Mother takes in all incoming messages and processes them instantly, deciding what is pertinent.

HK: You said that you want to keep the characters somewhat human. Is there variety among the characters that sets them apart on that level?
WP: Personalities, of course. On the physical level: Mother and Pilgrim are the only females. Pilgrim is Indian, Grail is Filipino. The rest are of caucasian mix.

HK: Why is Dane the leader?
WP: He's big. (laughter) One of the things I stress with the

team is that they make up a special operations team, and each is a highly specialized individual. Dane is the team leader just because he can lead. It's second nature for him to instantly take a course of action in any given situation—it may not be the right one, but he does it. Most people would just stand there and think about reacting. He's a fast thinker and a hard, stern leader.

HK: What kind of situations would these guys get into? They're a branch of the government.

WP: Yeah, they are a secret branch of the government. There isn't public knowledge of them like there is for Youngblood. In the *Wetworks* series, Wetworks and Youngblood will be forced into a situation not of their own creation.

HK: The mini-series sets up the team, tells the origin?

WP: It introduces all the characters, explains what they can do, and sets up the premise as well. The conclusion of the mini-series sets up their introduction into the Image Universe. The mini-series will concentrate on the team, making them strong enough to stand on their own. Plus, the situation in the mini-series doesn't really lend itself to having guest stars.

And the creative team is Whilce Portacio, co-creator, co-writer, penciller; Scott Williams, inker; Brandon Choi, co-creator, co-writer; Mike Heisler, letterer; Joe Rosas, colorist. Wetworks—*in comic shops everywhere this October!*

WETWORKS: Team 7

1: Team Commander, DANE (Jackson Dane)

2: Executive Officer, MOTHER ONE (Rachel Rhodes)

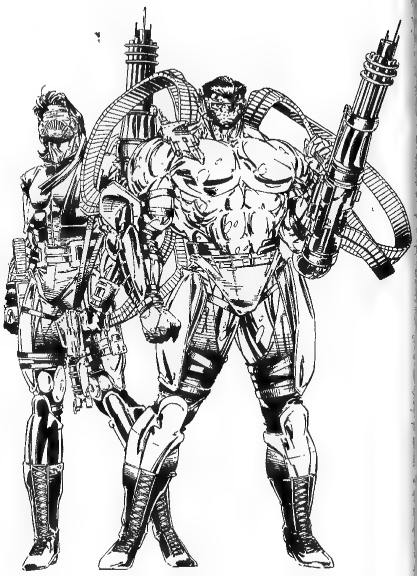
3: Recon. Scout/Sniper, PILGRIM (Maritza Blackbird)

4: Heavy Weapons #1, DOZER (John Thomas Biggs)

5: Heavy Weapons #2, CLAYMORE (Clayton Maure)

6: Light Weapons #1, GRAIL (Joel Alonday II)

7: Light Weapons #2, JESTER (Travis McCord)



Grail and Dozer from Whilce Portacio's WETWORKS, coming from Image Comics in October!

INDUSTRY NEWS

Malibu Skyrockets to Record 12.39%

Image, Image, Image? In less than six months, the Image line-up of titles has put the direct sales market in a hectic buying frenzy. retailers are ordering unprecedented quantities of each new release. This month, Jim Lee's *WILDC.A.T.S* broke the previously set Todd McFarlane's *Spawn* record as the best-selling creator-owned comic book (which broke Rob Liefeld's *Youngblood* record).

July's marketshare report sets several new benchmarks. First, Image took three of the five spots on Diamond's Previews Top 250 Comics List, with *WILDC.A.T.S #1* in the number one spot, *Brigade #1* in at number three and *Spawn #3* at number five. *Savage Dragon #2* also performed extremely well, coming in at number fifteen.

No publisher in the history of the direct market has ever come in at over a 10% marketshare besides DC Comics and Marvel Comics - until Malibu, that is.

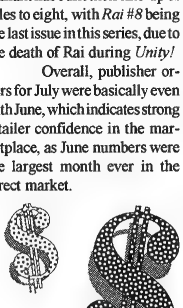
Marvel's July marketshare dropped 4.51% from June. Even with Image taking three out of the top five slaes spots, Marvel still dominated the top fifty with seven out of the top ten and thirty-nine out of the top fifty. Marvels' big books of the month for July were *Spider-Man #26*, *X-Men #12* and *Morbius #1*. Also of special interest was *William Shatner's TekWorld #1*.

DC's overall marketshare increased 1.01% from June, based on a strong line-up of projects such as *The Heckler #1*, *Sandman: Season of Mists* hardcover and softcover, *Lobo's Blazing Chain of Love #1* and *Lobo's Back #3* and *#4*. Orders for the five versions of the *Team Titans #1* came in lower than anticipated. Overall, DC took six out of the top fifty spots on the list.

Dark Horse Comics maintained its marketshare in July, dropping only slightly (.65%) to 5.42%. New projects included *Dark Horse Classics #1: The Last of the Mohicans*, *Evil Dead: Army of Darkness #1*, *Nexus: The Origin* and *Flaxen #1*. Finally, orders for *Robocop vs. Terminator #3* were very strong.

Valiant mustered a 2.72% for the month of July, as post Unity orders came in at close to 66% of Unity numbers. Valiant has built their line-up of titles to eight, with *Rai #8* being the last issue in this series, due to the death of Rai during *Unity!*

Overall, publisher orders for July were basically even with June, which indicates strong retailer confidence in the marketplace, as June numbers were the largest month ever in the direct market.



Heroic Publishing Drops Tradename

Beginning with issues dated January 1993, Heroic Publishing titles such as *Flare* and *The League of Champions* will in fact be Heroic Publishing titles. As of that date, Heroic Publishing will cease to use its "Hero Graphics" and "Hero Comics" tradenames on products aimed at the direct sale comic book market.

The principal reason Heroic Publishing has decided to limit the use of the "Hero" label is to avoid a continuing possibility of retailer and fan confusion between Heroic Publishing and the role-playing game company, *Hero Games*. Simply put, there is not and has not been any relationship between Heroic Publishing and Hero games since 1988, when Hero Games entered into its ongoing distribution arrangement with Iron Crown Enterprises. Since that time, as Heroic publishing has announced on several occassions, Heroic Publishing comic book titles such as *Flare* and *The League of Champions* have not has anything to do with Hero Games role-playing games. The two companies are, always have been, and will continue to e completely separate entities.

Heroic Publishing's new logo will appear in the upper left hand corner of its January 1993 titles, incorporating the company name and a character illustration, plus price and issue information.

Condolences

Arena Magazine would like to offer their deepest condolences to the family and friends of Todd Loren. Todd was the inventive publisher of Revolutionary Comics. Here's to the "The Great Wide Open".

Thank you, Martin Goodman (patriarch of Marvel Comics), for that which you've given. Are there any superheroes in heaven? There are now.

Joe Schuster, without you, the world's luster is a bit less radiant. Thank you for giving us the Man of Tomorrow and showing us the definition of a true and steadfast hero. "Up, up and away!"

To William Maxwell Gaines, "What, Me Worry?" Thanks for the laughs.

Dark Horse Grows Yet Again

Publisher Mike Richardson announced that Dark Horse Comics is again undergoing big changes and growth. A whole slew of new employees and the construction of larger facilities are the first steps in the developments taking place at Dark Horse.

"There's no looking back," said Richardson. "Now that we're averaging well over 30 titles per month, we've expanded our staff and facilities to accommodate these projects."

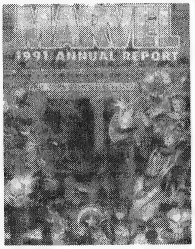
Marvel's Annual Report

In June, the Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. manumitted its first *Annual Report* as a publicly traded company in a format which Wall Street types might find "different than most" and Direct Market types might want to collect.

As CEO Bill Bevins and President & COO Terry Stewart comment in their opening letter, "It isn't every day that you see serious financial documents filled with wild costumed characters - flying, leaping and crawling across the page...But then, this is Marvel - The House of Ideas! And these characters are the driving force behind our business."

In the report's first eight pages, Uatu the Watcher describes a colorful comic-book format "mini-epic" which implements Marvel characters to epitomize the history of the company and its 1991 achievements. This intro leads into the more "earth-bound" sections of the report: a summary of the company's three revenue sources (publishing, licensing and advertising) and eighteen pages worth of financial data and analysis.

The report shows net revenues of $115,144,000 in 1991 (up 42% from the previous year), gross profit of $56,926,000 (up 53.5%) and net income of $16,098,000 (up 96%), with the bulk of the increases coming from Marvel's publishing activities.



The report ascribes Marvel's boost in net publishing revenues and profitability to "increased sales made on a non-returnable basis to comic book specialty stores", a category of sales which "increased to 77% of the company's net publishing revenue in 1991, up 73% from 1990."

The report shows 24,176 shares and common equvalent shares outstanding, with earnings per share of $.67 in 1991. The only "extraordinary item" in the report is a "$.4 million extraordinary loss, net of takes $.3 million, which represents a write-off of the related deferred financing costs associated with its revolving credit facility in proportion to the reduction in commitments."

How would Uatu the Watcher paraphrase that?

Protests Surround Dahmer Comic

The release of *Jeffrey Dahmer: An Unauthorized Biography of a Serial Killer* by Boneyard Press has sparked protests in Milwaukee and other cities. The initial media coverage in Milwaukee reportedly consisted of a local television news team taking a copy of the comic to family members of Dahmer victims and filming their reactions. This ghoulish sight caused considerable local outrage and resulted in a protest march in Milwaukee on Saturday, May 16th. According to coverage in The Milwaukee Journal, over a dozen groups participated in the rally, mustering about 100 marchers. Milwaukee-area protesters also reportedly bussed to Champaign, Illinois the weekend of June 13th to protest at the home of the comic's publisher. National coverage also occurred - Faith Daniels featured Boneyard publisher Hart Fisher along with relatives of Dahmer victims on a recent NBC show, "A Closer Look", carried in many markets. One Milwaukee-area comics retailer interviewed by local media said that the comic had not been selling well at all until local media attention began. Some retailers responded by pulling books from their shelves; others are reportedly selling copies of the first printing for as much as $35.

JEFFREY DAHMER

TSR vs. GDW

Dangerous Journeys Leads to Lawsuit

On May 11th, 1992, TSR Inc. filed suit against Game Designers' Workshop, Inc. and Omega Helios, Ltd. for "trademark infringement, trade dress infringement, false designation, dilution, unfair competition, breach of contract, tortious interference, and other causes of action." In reaction to this, GDW emitted the ensuing statement:

"*May 20th, 1992. Normal, Illinois.* Game Designers' Workshop announced that their upcoming multi-genre role-playing game system will be released under the name *Dangerous Journeys* instead of *Dangerous Dimensions*. GDW's president, Frank Chadwick, expounded the cause for the decision as follows:

"On the 13th of this month, TSR claimed that the use and display of the name *Dangerous Dimensions* infringes on their trademark *Dungeons & Dragons* by representing that the 'products are affiliated with or sponsored by TSR products...' Everyone associated with the project knows that this is an absurd claim. I know it's not nice to bad-mouth the competition, but the simple truth is that's the last thing we would want anyone to think. No consumer would ever be confused, in any way, as to the difference.

"But GDW is in business to publish games, not to argue in court. We're not really interested in spending the time or money required to prove that TSR is wrong, and neither are the other companies involved in the project. As a result, all of the companies involved, both here and abroad, agreed to simply change the name to the *Dangerous Journeys* game. It's an equally good name, and should let us get on with what's important..."

The Settlement Agreement pointed out one count of the intended suit may have something to do regarding an understanding made between TSR, Inc. and Gary Gygax when Gygax left the company on October 22nd, 1985. The wording "on information and belief" imports that while it hasn't been borne out in court that the *Dangerous Journeys* game system is in fact property of TSR, Inc., TSR believes that to the best of their knowledge, the *Dangerous Journeys* game system is derived from the properties owned by TSR, Inc. On June 15th, 1992, TSR's lawyers addressed GDW's lawyers a letter stating that they are no longer seeking a preliminary injunction against GDW, but they continue to contend that the game is a derivative work of their games. This case is yet to be decided.

The *Dangerous Journeys* game was created by Gary Gygax as part of his new Mythus multi-genre gaming system and is the property of Omega Helios, Ltd. GDW is the licensed publisher of the English language variant of the role-playing game.

SOUTHERN KNIGHTS
THE MORRIGAN WARS!
#35 COVER: PREZ ART: MANA/PROPST $4
#36 COVER: PROPST ART: CLARK/PROPST $4
#5 COVER: MCDONNELL ART: SIMPSON/PEREZ $4
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BLUE LINE PRESENTS

HOW TO...

By Joe Martin

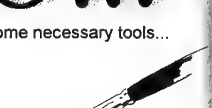
As promised, this chapter of *How To* is about Inking. Although I do very little of it these days (pencils, writing and editing take up the majority of my time), I'm going to let you in on what I've learned. First of all, no matter how proud you may be of a pencilled page, it must be inked before it ever sees print. An inker can make or break an artist in some cases. A talented inker can make unexceptional pencilling look first-rate while an okay inker can make great pencilling look "blah". So, if you ever have a choice, choose wisely.

What exactly does it mean to ink a page? It means that someone has to go over the pencilled work converting the panels into a meticulously inked finished composition with either a pen (most common are rapidographs) or a brush. The brush is the choice of most mainstream artists and the standard are Windsor Newton sable hair brushes, thickness depending on the individual (I actually know one artist who buys a rather large brush and whittles it down to a fine point). Sounds easy? Maybe, maybe not.

Inking, as you can probably already grasp, is of utmost importance to a story. If you don't give inkers much credit, start. Inking can be wearisome and it requires a clear head. Make sure you have a solid work area, plenty of materials: rags, water, opaque, brushes, rulers and ink, of course. The chosen ink of most artists is Waterproof Black India Ink, any brand will do. If you screw up, don't worry. That's why they make white opaque. Just paint over the mistake, wait a few seconds, and you can ink right over it. No problem.

Let's get to what's important. Every inker will first stress to you the significance of *line value* or *line quality* and another common term for this is your "thick-to-thins". This is a primary function that "spawns" (sorry, had to do

Some necessary tools...



Windsor-Newton Sable Hair #3 Brush

Black India Ink

White Opaque

Water (to clean your brush)

Rags

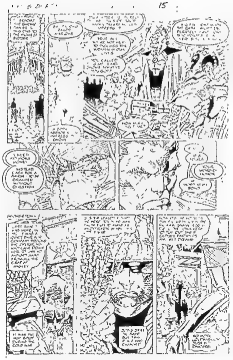
Ruler

it) a good inker, so look sharp. Line value is what gives a penciler's renderings energy and life. Instead of merely tracing the pencil lines, you should recreate them, almost as if you're redrawing them. That's why it's quite apropos that an inker, too, must be an artist. It's so much more than just tracing. Without line value, a drawing will look spiritless and rather dull and above all, amateur. And that, my friends, will never get you a job.

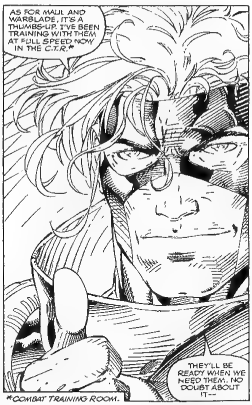
To really master the concept of line value, I suggest you use a brush. It's not easy. You must have a steady hand and great control to be able to make lines that are clean and sharp, never scratchy. "Thick-to-Thins" are engendered by slight pressure applied to the brush in necessary areas and eased off in others. Where should your line be heavy and where should it be light? The primary elements outlining this concept is *light* and, to a lesser degree, *weight*. On characters and objects where a light source occurs directly, the line is typically thin whereas it's much thicker when light scarcely reaches the surface area. Lines are almost always, as a rule, heavier on the undersides of objects. Examine the provided illustrations to better understand what I'm saying.

Repetition of brush strokes are another vital and essential consideration and a term for it is "*feathering*", however I've rarely heard that expression used anymore. Basically, these are parallel lines, roughly parallel, that vary somewhat in thickness to generate different textures and patterns (i.e. rounded-off shadows on muscles, waves of hair, etc.). These strokes are important and must be steadily applied. Bad "feathering" will kill a good piece of art as well as letting your dog eat it.

Then, there's *cross-hatching*. This technique isn't used by all artists and I feel that it's rare to see an artist that pulls it off without it looking like a criss-cross pattern of lines instead of shadows. If you wish to study cross-hatching, I can tell you the current masters are *Jim Lee* and *Scott Williams* and two of my past favorites (on the pencilling side, and most inkers did them justice) are *Arthur Adams* and *Barry Windsor Smith*. Study these guys and you won't go wrong, if you do it right. However, I must warn you that too much cross-hatching can overwork the pencils and that's not good (especially if you show your work to a DC editor...Ouch!). An overworked page, either with lines or cross-hatching, too many blacks or whatever, is



Lee & Williams


AS FOR MAUL AND WARBLADE, IT'S A THUMBS-UP. I'VE BEEN TRAINING WITH THEM AT FULL SPEED NOW IN THE C.T.R.*
THEY'LL BE READY WHEN WE NEED THEM. NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.
*COMBAT TRAINING ROOM.

Lee & Williams

Martin & Hickey

very hard to follow, and when you reduce it down to comic book size it becomes next to unbearable! It draws everything so much closer and gives a very crowded and unprofessional look to the final product. Adding too many elements in inking will cause everything to mesh together and nothing will stand out, meaning you've lost the dynamics of the page and it's just not as pleasing to the eye.

Placement of blacks, or *spotting blacks* which seems to be the more common phrase being used these days, is another very important consideration when it comes to inking. You must know where to spot your strong black areas although, in many cases, this is indicated by the penciller. However, this is an important concept every inker should be fluent with regardless of who is pencilling. Too much or too little black can ruin a well-drawn page. Placement of blacks lend *strength*, *create dramatic moods* and *focus* the reader's eye, attracting it to points of interest. Normally, placement of blacks should have a symmetry, in other words your panels should be well-balanced with solid dark areas. In most cases, it's easiest to keep one light source as a reference for that panel and spot from that source.

Logically, as an artist, you will have some idea of your light source and how the shadows will work (what helps me is to think three-dimensional). The other advantage of spotting blacks is to create a dramatic effect. Dread and impending danger can sometimes be very well construed by boldly implementing black masses such as large shadows that nearly encompass figures or objects. Silhouettes also work nicely in some cases. Masters to study in this area are *Mike Mignola*, *Steve Rude*, *Frank Miller*, and classics such as *Will Eisner* and *Alex Toth*. Always have a specific reason for adding blacks.

I'm running out of room here, so let's wrap this up. The penciler pencils and then it's up to the inker to enhance the product making it a work of "art". An inker should understand and utilize line value, feathering, cross-hatching and spotting. If this is done well, then you've got a comic to be proud of!

Thanks for reading and I hope you enjoyed my "How To..." columns in *Comics Arena*. If I helped, write in and let me know! If you think I'm full of bull, write in! After you've applied the things I've talked about these past three issues, follow through by reading comics writer and artist

Mignola

Eisner

Lurene Haines' (*Green Arrow, Ms. Fury, Predator*) column "Breaking Into The Comics Business" beginning in issue #6. It promises to be a great help to all aspiring comic enthusiasts itching to be dubbed "professional". Ciao, babe.

GAMING NEWS

AFTERMATH! TECHNOLOGY!

Aftermath! Technology! is a rules expansion and technology supplement designed for the *Aftermath!* role playing game system. Included in this supplement are modifications to the original Aftermath! combat system, a Universal Character Generator with an expanded list and descriptions of 39 various humanoid races, details on over 100 cybernetic devices and options, rules for space travel (including faster than light travel), spaceship design, robots, alien creatures, a detailed list of 38 new skills, High Tech and exotic equipment, detailed breakdowns on several hundred weapons and simple rules for netrunning.

The information is kept as easy to understand as possible, to avoid complicating your game. while adding as much action and detail as possible. Both experienced *Aftermath!* players as well as new ones will find this book an invaluable aid to their *Aftermath!* gaming.

Available from Dinosaur Games, *Aftermath! Technology!* retails for $12.95. For information about Dinosaur Games, write them at 3926 Harts Mill Ln., Atlanta, GA 30319.

Dinosaur Games
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DRAGONLANCE CONTINUES!

Tales of the Lance is the perfect introductory game to TSR's popular *Dragonlance* Saga. In fact, over 12 million *Dragonlance* products have been sold to date! Consumers like the action, drama, and suspense of the novels, and they'll love this game. It details the world of Krynn, its characters and how to run an *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* campaign in this incredible setting! *Tales of The Lance* is created for both the *Dungeon Master* and the player. It is the first ever *Dragonlance* boxed set - and it's the first comprehensive game product to unveil this exciting adventure world. Tales of the Lance is cross-promoted with the new *Dragonlance Tales II* trilogy.

Retailers get a free full-color game display to boost their sales! Cash in on one of TSR's most heavily promoted products of the year! Place your order for *Tales of the Lance* today!

DOOM!

BAH!! I HAVE FAILED WITH THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY.
MY GREATEST FOE IS NOW LESS THAN AN ANT. IT IS TIME FOR A NEW RACE TO HUMANITY'S TOP. THE SKRULLS.

The *Lands of Dr. Doom* campaign set commemorates 30 years of Marvel's master villain. This box contains 192 pages about Dr. Doom and the Balkan countries of the Marvel Universe, Latveria, Symkaria (home to Silver Sable), and Transia (birthplace of Scarlet Witch, Quicksilver and the Puppet Master, and base of the High Evolutionary).

This is the first *Marvel Super Heroes* game supplement to expand beyond the United States and give detailed settings in the heart of Europe. Some of the features include history and folklore of the three tiny nations, a complete explanation of Victor Von Doom, including his 30 years of comic book history, a complete bibliography of every major appearance of Dr. Doom, a catalogue of nearly every invention, weapon and android created by Doom, a poster of Doomstadt, the capital of Latveria, an original map of Castle Doom and two major campaign adventures.

Here's everything you ever wanted to know about the man called Doom! Excitement and hours of fast-paced action await you just over the borders and inside the *Lands of Dr. Doom* campaign set!

GAMING NEWS

GARY GYGAX RETURNS

At the heart of the *Mythus* game is the *Dangerous Journeys* system, a genre-spanning game universe that will forever expand the horizons of your imagination. Although the *Dangerous Journeys* line begins with the fantasy genre, that is by no means the limit of its scope. Instead, it was built from the ground up to address every aspect of adventure: Fantasy. Horror. Science Fiction...and beyond.

While separate genres will place emphasis on different mechanics than others (the *Unhallowed* horror-genre game, for example, provides an alternate description of the supernatural and the laws governing it), the core rules of the game system and *Heroic Personas* (characters) remain constant!

Persona generation is as rich and detailed as anything you have ever experienced. Once you create your first Heroic Persona, you'll understand why the system is powerful enough to address any genre in roleplaying.

...NO TIME FOR PEACE

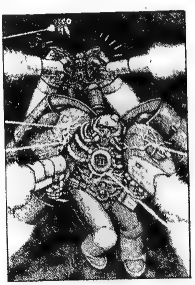
"In the nightmare future of the 41st Millennium there is no time for peace. No respite, no forgiveness. There is only war."

Warhammer 40,000 is a science fiction battle game from the makers of the *Warhammer Fantasy Battle* system. The lavishly illustrated hardback rulebook covers all the aspects of the ame, including an extensive description of the universe of the 41st Millennium and the Human and alien races, notes on buying and painting miniatures, plus a complete battle scenarion to get you started. You can command forces of the dreaded Space Marines, bands of marauding Orks, groups of sophisticated but deadly Eldar, or any of the other several races. Psionics, vehicles and heavy weapons are all covered in detail, and the profusion of illustrations and photographs convey the unique atmosphere that has made *Warhammer 40,000* the best-selling game of its type.

If you haven't checked this out but you are interested, it's highly urged that you do so. *Warhammer 40,000* is distributed and manufactured by Games Workshop and is available at all better comic and gaming retail stores.

NEWSFLASH!

Dark Horse Comics and Games Workshop are reportedly arranging an agreement in which Dark Horse will publish a series of comics based on *Warhammer 40,000*. Mark Hall, GW Sales Manager, says, "We hold Dark Horse in very high regard, and we feel that Dark Horse is the best company to produce *Warhammer 40,000* because the game has a very strong dark gothic imagery associated with it. Dark Horse has demonstrated a very sure hand in this kind of imagery with their licensed comics, and I think that this kind of approach will work well in the *Warhammer 40,000* genre." Mike Richardson, president of Dark Horse Comics, and Tom Kirby, president of Games Workshop, have been convening this past summer to "hammer" down the final agreement.



GAMING NEWS

EXPLORE THE LAND OF FATE

From the Bahr Al-Izdiham (Crowded Sea) in the south to the Haunted Lands 3,000 miles to the north, and from Afyal (Isle of the Elephant) in the east to the High Desert 2,000 miles to the west stretches the vast region of Zakhara, the Land of Fate. At the core of this great civilized land lies Huzuz, heart of the empire. The Grand Caliph, mightiest ruler in all the lands (save for the genies), holds court here in his magnificent palace. Caravans from all corners of the realm converge at Huzuz, where crafty merchants haggle at the bazaar. The city's docks are crowded with colorfully-rigged sambuks beginning their sea voyage to the far-oof lands of Faerun and Kara-Tur.

At the northern end of Suq Bay lies Hiyal, City of Intrigue. The dark sister to Huzuz, Hiyal is dismal and gray, moody and secretive. A good visit to Hiyal is a short one.

Much of the surrounding land is desert: great sandy wastes, towering dunes, volcanic badlands, salt flats, rocky uplands, and rugged cliffs. This is the realm of the Al-Badia, the proud nomads who bow to no one.

Even the nomads cannot penetrate the fiery core of the Haunted Lands, the domain of the genies, where the radiant towers of their awesome citadels outshine even the glittering desert sands.

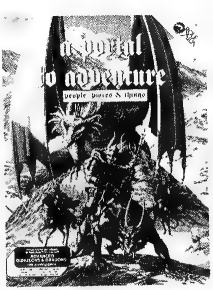
Grab your scimitar and leap to the back of your nimble, desert stallion. Let honor be your life, and fate your guide. Discover these treasures in the new *Land of Fate* boxed set from TSR.

A PORTAL TO ADVENTURE

Have you ever looked at something very familiar very closely for about one minute, and that item seemed somehow new to you, as if you never really saw it before? So it is with the *Role Aids* line of fantasy role-playing supplements.

Although *Role Aids* have been around for quite a while, Mayfair Games plans to open some old and new customer's eyes with their 1992 releases. Hot on the heels of *Demons* comes A *Portal to Adventure*. This 128-page sourcebook is a game master's dream come true when he needs last minute items for a campaign. All too often, the player's characters will head in the opposite direction of that which the game master wishes them to. With the numerous people, places and things found in *A Portal to Adventure*, however, the game master will be prepared for any disaster.

A Portal to Adventure details dozens of unique locations, special characters, unusual things and magical items. The outstanding original cover art is by well-known fantasy artist, Larry Elmore. Ships in September and retails for $13.00.



WARRIORS OF THE ETERNAL SUN!

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The Gaming Fool's Review

by Joe Martin

I am the *Gaming Fool*. I decree henceforth the attempt shall be enacted to review a role-playing game in each issue of Arena. I'm going to rate the game's interest level, playability, originality and fun level according to my own views and convictions.

Recently, having attended the DragonCon in Atlanta, I've been lucky enough to acquire several games from several companies so allow me to give you my impression of the attending gaming companies. The guys at TSR were friendly "down-to-earth" guys who were fun to talk to and rather generous. White Wolf was moderately friendly but really couldn't provide me with the answers to my questions still they were somewhat openhanded. Chaosium were talkers, and they were excited about their products (as well as knowledgeable) but did not allow us to sample their products (we had to write in). FASA were a give-and-take between White Wolf and Chaosium, having a general knowledge of what they were about yet not, however, like TSR, they were generous with their products. GDW were hard-hitting with a great display and loads of enthusiasm and they were handing out copies of Gary Gygax's new *Dangerous Journeys* left and right! . And Palladium had the least impressive display but were fun to talk with and seemed very casual in a good way.

But, enough about my company review, let's get to this month's feature games.

First, I'm going to talk about the *Land of Fate* from TSR. I'm sure, now, that you know somewhat what to expect. It's based on the *AD&D* gaming system, which I feel is one of the best systems to play. The actual book I received was *Al-Qadim Arabian Adventures* by Jeff Grubb but there is a *Land of Fate* boxed set which provides even greater detail. The actual name of the locality in this supplement is Zakhara, an immense region of sea and desert with interesting landmarks, regions and cities which is located in the same world as Faerun and Kara-Tur (*Forgotten Realms*). Already to many of you I know it's a winner. And to that end I must agree!

I was allured by this land where honor seems to be everything and fate is all. For a basis of the setting of this world let's take an excerpt from the game's introduction - "'The Seven Voyages of Sinbad', 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves', 'Aladdin and his Magic Lamp', these and other classics fill the pages of Arabian Nights. Each story is told by a very wise and beautiful young woman called Scheherazade..." The land of Zakhara can be compared to Hollywood's vision of Arabia. You have great warriors, explorers and traders, as well as great knowledge and civilization. The Al-Qadim campaign blends the real with the imagined, the natural with the supernatural and you will encounter the world of genies and ghuls, mad barbers and magicians, strong jawed warriors brandishing curved swords, holy assassins, desert riders, nomads and veiled maidens.

You got the picture? Oh, of course there's one thing Al-Qadim has that Hollywood's Arabia (any Arabia that I know of, for that matter) doesn't - elves,

continued next page...

half-elves, dwarves, halflings, gnomes, orcs and even ogres. And there's no sentiment of separate racial societies in Zakhara. There are areas of course where elves might outnumber humans but the elves don't envisage themselves as a singular nation or people. Ogres are not even spurned in Zakhara. "Lifestyle - not race - tends to separate Zakharans". In the Land of Fate, you're either an Al-Badia - a nomad - or an Al-Hadhar, whose lifestyles are stationary.

The most important views in Zakhara deal with honor and family. A Zakharan proverb states, "Life without honor is meaningless" and another bespeaks, "A man without a family is not a man." Of course, I played a female holy assassin with no family but her adoptive nomad associates. She also refused to wear a veil so I suppose she was pretty low class but if there's one thing I know, AD&D rules are not written in stone. But, the game is fun. I liked it enough that we've started up a whole new campaign. If you're into Arabian adventure, pick this one up!

Al-Qadim Arabian Adventures

Interest Level

Playability

Originality

Fun Level

How my rating system works: is pitiable bordering on the pathetic, is adequately formidable yet in need of study, is exceptionally beneficent and proven, is most eminently gratifying and proficient, a master if you will, is of the utmost superior quality, a champion amongst the rabble. God forbid that I should not give a because that means it stank the stench of the spoiled entrails of a thousand putrefied goblin carcasses.

Join me next time when I review another game. One of which I, as of yet, still must decide upon. Be here.

..."C'MON PLAY SERIOUS"...
KATAN, YOU ARE NOW BEING APPROACHED BY A FAIR ELVEN MAIDEN.
IS SHE NAKED!? IS SHE NAKED?!
OH NO... HERE WE GO AGAIN.
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GARY GYGAX'S

DANGEROUS JOURNEYS

MYTHUS

Gary Gygax's Dangerous Journeys

At the heart of the *Mythus* game is the *Dangerous Journeys* system, a genre spanning game universe that will forever expand the horizons the imagination. Although the *Dangerous Journeys* line begins with the fantasy genre, that is by no means the limit of its scope. Instead, it was built from the ground up to address every aspect of adventure: Fantasy, Horror, Science Fiction...and beyond.

While separate genres will place emphasis on different mechanics than others (the **Unhallowed** tm horror-genre game, for example, provides an alternate description of the supernatural and laws governing it), the core of the systems is the description of Heroic Personas (characters) and their means of interacting. These core rules remain constant.

Persona generations is as rich and detailed as anything you have ever experienced. Once you generate your first Heroic Persona, you'll understand why the system is powerful enough to address (and surpass) any genre in roleplaying.

Mythus

Fantasy Roleplaying Game

For **GDW** to publish a fantasy role-playing game, it had to be great, and the *Mythus* game is just that! Designed by Gary Gygax, the *Mythus* roleplaying game is a fantasy *tour de force*, with all of the inventiveness of Gygax's earlier works. Plus a game system that simply cannot be beat for flexibility, believability, and playability. In fact, the system serves as the core rules for a whole series of interlinked

role-playing genres, all part of the *Dangerous Journeys* series, of which the *Mythus* fantasy RPG is the first release.

The extraordinary strength of the system is its ability to combine high playability with high detail throughout the game. The magick system is just one example, allowing specialization in a wide variety of disciplines, access to a fantastic catalogue of spell castings, and practical guides to modifying existing patterns of knowledge into entirely new enchantments.

As the new state of the art in roleplaying, the *Mythus* fantasy game allows you to create truly unique characters and take them anywhere your imagination will take you.

Mythus Magick

Mythus™ Book II

The *Mythus Magick, Mythus Fantasy Roleplaying Game Book II*, details the game's magick rules and expands Casting lists into a book nearly as large as the *Mythus* game itself! Included here are over a thousand spells, charms etc., all in exquisite detail, plus rules for spell creation, and detailed rules for incorporating psychogenic powers from other games in the *Dangerous Journeys* line. All the information from the "**Magick**" chapter of the *Mythus* book is repeated here as well, so that players of spellcasting Heroic Personas need not flip back and forth between the two books.

The Epic of AErth

Companion Volume

The Epic of AErth book, the companion volume to the *Mythus* game, details the natural milieu for fantasy, and then some. AErth is a world quite similar to our own, but in which technology and civilization remain at a Late Renaissance level, though magick is quite extensively developed. Here, players' Heroic Personas can visit AEropa (the Avillonian Isles, which include mighty Lyonnesse), explore the

"Dark continent" of Afrik, cruise the Nylle River past AEgypt's four great pyramids, travel the Mare Phonecium, which indents the desert of Afrik, or sail the long reaches of the Mare Ostrum, which reaches from eastern AEropa to the steppes of Central Azir.

Not only will players be able to venture across the face of the planet, they can also enter the labyrinths which honeycomb that world-Subterranean AErth's **Shallowshadow**, **Midgloom**, and **Deepdark**-or journey to the hollow interior of the planet where ancient life forms still exist.

Yet there still remains the counter-world of Phaeree, a world of wild magick, with its own outer, subterranean, and interior realm. These are the lands of Faerie (the Seelie Court, ranging from lordly dragons of the Orient to elves, unicorns, baku, and more in between) of Goblin (the Unseelie Court, with drakes, wyrms, serpents, and giants, evil once-men, onis, and undead), and of Hobgoblin (wild unpredictable creatures that dwell among all three spheres).

Mythus tm

Gamemaster's Screen

The *Mythus* game is very detailed, but it is based upon relatively few, simple, straightforward frameworks. This **GM**'s screen collects those frameworks together with commonly used tables into one easy-to-access tool that also serves to hide **GM** secrets from the players' prying eyes. Included is a book of other play aids, such as maps and floor plans that can be used for combat scenes, and photocopyable sheets for keeping track of GM and player persona abilities and equipment.

Necropolis tm

The *Necropolis* campaign scenario, a *Mythus* adventure by Gary Gygax, sweeps your Heroic Persona across the dramatic landscapes of AErth's most magickal kingdom, AEgypt, in search of a lost tomb. After a picturesque journey up the great river Nylle, the action begins. From a desert caravanserai and a bandit ambush, the personas find their way to the ancient burial grounds of the Gorge of Osiris. There they encounter evil in the guise of good-a dangerous madman and lurking personas finally find the location of the lost tomb they have sought, but in its magickal maze lurk such foes as are encountered only in a nightmare! But it's too late to turn back-the heroes must prevail or perish!

Novels complementing the *Dangerous Journeys* multi-genre universe
by Gary Gygax

The Anubis Murders

Best-selling author Gary Gygax conjures the unusual mixture of fantasy and mystery and brings them together in the themes of Egyptian mythology and Arthurian legend-all set on an alternate world, a distant parallel of our own planet-Aerth. Meet the AEgyptian wizard-priest, Magister Setne Inhetep. The Magister and his companion, Rachelle, are called to the Isles of Avillonia to solve the mystery of The Anubis Murders. Strange things are afoot. Rachelle disappears. The Magister is accused of being the puppeteer behind a bizarre string of killings. Find out what peculiar things magick does to criminology. It's adventure, murder and mystery with the twist of Magick.

The Samarkand Solution

Like Gygax, Magister Setne Inhetep is at it once again! While his beautiful bodyguard Rachelle is away, the Magister is left to his own devices. What better than a professional convocation and opportunity to revisit some of his old haunts? Once again the priest-wizard of Thoth finds himself enmeshed in a web of crime. The Magister discovers that assassination, bribery, thievery, treason and mayhem blanket the AEgyptian city of On with a darkness that threatens to engulf the whole of the Triple Kingdom. Murder follows murder, as a deadly killer stalks all who seek to unravel the mystery of The Samarkand Solution.

Death In Delhi

It seems a stranger courier has delivered a package containing a beautiful ruby necklace to the villa of the Magister. With the gift, the Magister and Rachelle are beckoned to the Maharajate of Delhi, where they discover that the Maharajah's Crown Jewels have been stolen. It's a strange and harrowing journey with danger all about, but nothing compared to what they find when they reach the city itself? Not only have the jewels vanished, but the royal treasurer has been burned to ashes, the court magician is missing, and rebels

threaten the evil monarch whom they once served. In the city of Delhi, a scheming king, a witch, and armed rebels are all too ready to see that the Magister and his companion meet their Death In Delhi.

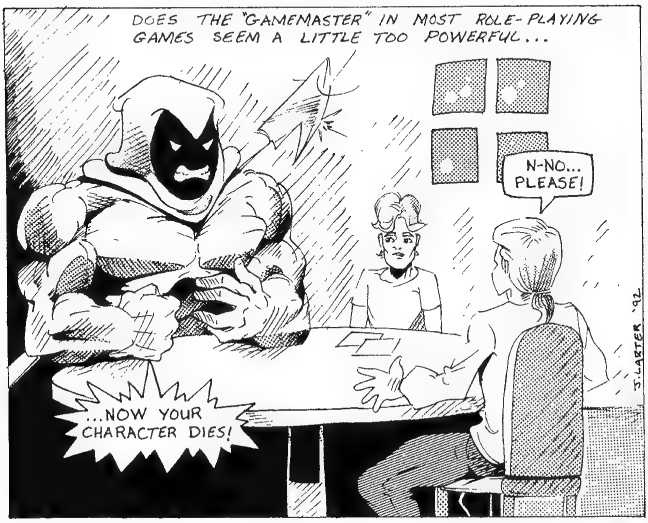
Video Games

A number of companies are currently involved in producing electronic games for the *Dangerous Journeys* universe, all led by JVC, the global leader in the electronic game field. The *Dangerous Journeys* project has JVC's highest expectations and support, and it has funded the development of state-of-the-art software for virtually every popular hardware platform, including video games (both cartridge and CD Rom versions) as well as personal computers (both Floppy disc and CD Rom versions). Initial release are scheduled for the fall of 1992.

Miniatures

Hobby Products GmbH. of Germany, one of the top miniatures manufacturers in the world, and best known in the United State for their Metal Magic tm line of fantasy figures, will release the first of many 25mm miniatures designed expressly for the *Dangerous Journeys* game line beginning in late 1992

Europe's top sculptors have been enlisted to ensure that this will be a figure line unlike any you've ever seen. The exotic lands of AErth and Phaeree come to life in three dimensions with these lovingly crafted miniatures.



TRADING CARD NEWS

Republicans Attack!

Just in time for the stretch run to the White House comes *Republicans Attack!*, a set of 36 full color boxed trading cards that makes biting fun of the whole process. Co-produced by Mark Landam and James Vance, this set spins what the authors call a "paranoid fantasy" of a GOP takeover of the country. *Republicans Attack!* is published by Kitchen Sink Press and retails for $10.95.

In the scenario, the GOP is determined to implement a New World Order at home by eliminating such pesky impediments to Republicanism such as Congressional debate and the electoral process. The Hubble Space Telescope is employed to incinerate stongholds of Democratic voters and George Bush declares martial law. As the Republicans takeover, squadrons of enforcers - called "pinstripers" - take to the streets to hassle the homeless and eliminate resistance. Pat Buchanan walls off the borders of the country to block immigation, and David Duke's followers blow up America's inner cities. Richard Nixon gets to implement his old Enemies List, enhanced by time into a miles-long sheet of paper.

Meanwhile, a resistance movement spearheaded by Jane Fonda and Hilary Clinton grows to combat the terrifying yet ultimately boring takeover of the country by the Republicans.

Dennis Kitchen, publisher, calls this "a no-holds barred swipe at the political situation. Voters seem to be fed up with politics and politicians, and with 'politics as usual'. This card set captures that feeling. I view it as both satire as well as a call to action. Voters do have the power to make changes. The worst thing that could happen in 1992 would be for citizens to stay home on election day."

Mönster Baseball!

Mirage Publishing and Gahan Wilson present you with their *Limited Edition Monster Baseball Trading Card Set*! It's 10 full color original trading cards in a reusable self-closing pack. These cards have had exposure at all major trade shows and conventions and have been reviewed in trade publications such as *Wizard Magazine* and the *Comics Buyer's Guide*.

Best known for his offbeat cartoon illustartions seen in *Playboy Magazine*, *National Lampoon* and *The New Yorker*, Gahan Wilson has brought his weird genius to trading cards. Each ghoulish player is colorfully illustrated and comes complete with a short biography and vital statistics - including the numbers of the opponents eaten or mutilated! Appeals to all ages of collectors with a wide variety of interests, from sports to horror and especially humor. Perfect for Halloween!

TRADING CARD NEWS

Ya' Want Guts?

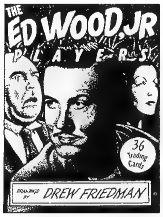
If you want guts, then he's got 'em! You want gunpowder? He's got that, too. Now, so can you in this all-new 90-card, full-color series set, *The Punisher Guts and Gunpowder Trading Cards!* Randomly inserted into these packs will be special Scratch'em and Sniff'em cards that smell like...Gunpowder?! Hey, it ain't roses, but you'll love it. Just like the Punisher, one shot and that's that. This is a one-time offer so get yours while supplies last! Ships in September from Comic Images.

Also, don't miss out on the *Spirits of Vengeance Keepsake Collection*! Hot art featuring covers #1 through #4 of this new series along with two dynamic splash pages. All this plus a bonus prism card as well. The six illustrations are done as 6" x 9" laminated trading cards and are also done in full color 2 1/2" x 3 1/2" trading card size on one laminated process sheet. Reatails for $14.99 from Comic Images.

Fantasy Art Trading Cards

FPG Cards presents Chris Achilleos' *Fantasy Art Trading Cards*! Enter the world of the fantastic, the beautiful and the erotic. It is the world of Chris Achilleos, and it is a world of stunning Amazon women, valiant warriors and hideous beasts. All this and more is now available for the first time ever in this spectacular series of 90 trading cards. In addition to all your favorites, there are many new, never seen before Chris Achilleos paintings. Special bonus cards are also inserted randomly in card packs and you may instantly win an original Achilleos painting valued at $15,000 or one of 20 original pencil drawings valued at $1,000 each! Other bonus cards include 250 signed and numbered autograph series cards and limited edition gold or silver "Foil Framed" cards. Don't miss this new set shipping in September!

Ed Wood, Jr. Players Card Set



Coming in September from Kitchen Sink is their newest trading card set, written and drawn by Drew Friedman. It's the *Ed Wood, Jr. Players Trading Card Set*, and nobody but Friedman, creator of Warts and All, could do it justice!

Friedman has long held Ed Wood, Jr., the eccentric movie director, and his films dear. The actors who appeared in Wood's films - Glen or Glenda, Plan 9 From Outer Space, Jailbait, and others - have been seen in many of Friedman's previous works. Tor Johnson, Vampira, Bela Lugosi, Criswell - they've all appeared in Friedman's lovingly detailed, pointilistic studies. And they're all in the card set.

Now, Friedman brings his knowledge and enthusiasm for Wood and his players to the *Ed Wood, Jr. Players Trading Card Set*, which will be printed in four separate colors on heavy card stock and come in a full-color box. The 36-card set is for all ages and retails for $10.95.

TRADING CARD NEWS

Skybox Impact Series

Impact. The name says it all. No other trading card captures the excitement of pro football with this much action and intensity. This 350-card set highlights the NFL's top players, including hard to find superstars such as Jim Kelly, Derrick Thomas, Jerry Rice and Troy Aikman plus future greats such as Steve Emtman.

The cards feature full color action photography on both sides, player iformation, including statistics and in-depth bios and an exclusive to *Skybox Impact* series: unique player position diagrams highlighting each player's position in the offensive or defensive formation. There's also limited edition cards such as randomly inserted Jim Kelly gold foil-stamped cards personally autographed by Kelly, randomly inserted holograms featuring two top NFL stars and the first ever dual autographed/dual sport card featuring Jim Kelly and Magic Johnson.

To follow will be Impact subsets such as *Instant Impact*, thirty of 1992's top rookies; *High Impact*, ten of the NFL's top statistical leaders like Thurman Thomas and Michael Irvin; and *Sudden Impact*, six of the most feared hitters in the league such as Ronnie Lott and Derrick Thomas.

Look for *Skybox Impact* on your retailer's shelves! It's a hit!

Totally Radd!

The high flying Sky Rider of the Spaceways makes a previously unannounced appearance in the Consumer Edition of Diamond's *Previews #9* via a bound-in *Silver Surfer Prism Card* from Comic Images. Inserted at the last minute as a special sneak-preview of Comic Images' forthcoming *Silver Surfer Prism Card Set*, this high-interest freebie is sure to generate plenty of excitement...and sales. Also included in *Previews #9* is a super hot, new Jim Lee *WILDC.A.T.S* card sheet from Topps!

By the way, don't overlook the collectible value of the Joe Jusko *Marvel Masterpieces Spider-Man Trading Card*, which was inserted in Diamond's *Previews #8* (Consumer Edition). This card can be removed without any damage, thereby maintaining its mint condition. This Jusko Spider-Man trading card will be unique, and is not available anywhere else exactly as it is in Previews!

PREVIEWS

Trading Card Set Sends Up U.S. Gov't

In a timely release, Tundra Publishing has announced a new set of fully-painted trading cards which cast a scathing, debunking, and humorous eye on some of the most outrageous and possibly illegal uses of taxpayer money. Nothing escapes the piercing eye of the writer-artist team, Bill Sienkiewicz and Peggy Gordon: a Presidential preview, the Congressional check-bouncing scandal, Senate Judiciary "follies" and political "handlers" all appear under the big top of Washington D.C.'s *Big Budget Circus* (The Most Taxing Show On Earth).

Six circus categories divide the set into segments: Jugglers (Congress), Clowns (Congressional Hearings and celebrity trials), Magicians (Political "Handlers"), Acrobats (The Candidates), High Wire Acts (Covert Operations) and last but not least, Circus Side Show Fantasies, the ticketholders! (Taxpayers who lose close to 40% of their weekly paychecks to taxes). Enter a world of congessional freebies: health clubs, hospital care, growing pensions and unlimited postage.

Big Budget Circus is written by Peggy Gordon and painted by Bill Sienkiewicz, the team that brought you last year's *Rock Bottom Awards for the Best and the Worst in Bad Taste* for Viacom and HBO's Comedy Central. Gordon also writes and composes for theater and TV. Sienkiewicz is also a well known comics artist and illustrator.

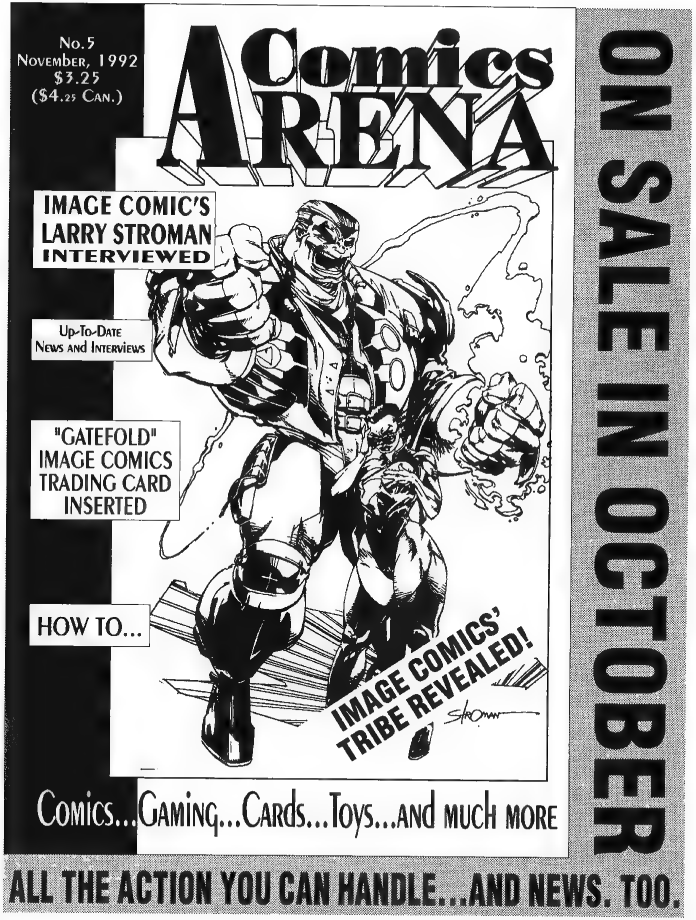
TRADING CARD NEWS

Varga Girls Introduced To Trading Cards

On October 15th, 1940, *Esquire* magazine introduced the *Varga girl* to the world. This fall, more than 50 years later, the illustrations originally created by Alberto Vargas, which captured the imagination of American servicemen during WWII, will be introduced as collectible trading cards by 21st Century Archives, Inc. under an exclusive license form The Hearst Corporation.

The first series, Pin-Up Girls, will contain the same 1940's illustrations which graced *Esquire* gatefolds, calendars and military back covers and later were pinned to walls, garages and barber shops across the country and in Army barracks around the world. Each set will contain one Prizm card, but some collectors will have a chance to find complete Limited Edition Prizm sets which will be randomly inserted into cases. Also included will be some images which were never published in the pages of *Esquire*. It also includes the first Varga girl, the Varga Girl "missing" her right arm and one Varga girl with an extra finger. The haste to produce some images was allegedly the cause. Collectors will also find out how these came to be called Varga Girls instead of Vargas Girls. There is even one Varga Girl posing in a baseball uniform.

Alberto Vargas' classic beauties show an extraordinary technical skill with watercolors and the airbrush, but more importantly, his works displayed a subtle and tasteful eroticism which expressed warmth, innocence and optimism which made these girls some of the most endearing images of American popular culture. He was heard to say, "...I will someday make a Varga Girl so beautiful, so perfect, so typical of the American girl, that I can put that picture in any part of the world without any signature...and they will say, that is a Varga Girl." Once you see this collectible trading card set, you'll realize he was successful.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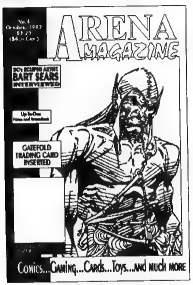
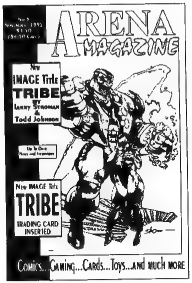


WHAT ARE YOU MISSING?



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We need more letters!

Dear Comics Arena,

I just picked up issue #1. The cover by Hugh Haynes was a nice touch. Interesting news articles but some colour inside would make it more attractive for readers. It's nice to see a comic interview magazine that doesn't just focus on Marvel or Image. How about some articles on Dark Horse, Valiant, Viz, DC, Caliber, Tundra, etc.?

The Hugh Haynes interview wasn't bad but it could have been more in-depth and longer. A picture of the people you interview would be a good idea. Also, an artist's sketchbook would be nice to see, showing page layout and the artist's pencils before it's inked.

I'd like to see future interviews with Kelley Jones, P. Craig Russell, Mike Mignola, Tim Truman, Mike Barr, Ann Nocenti, Dan Jurgens, Art Thibert, Steve Butler, Larry Stroman, Jackson Guice, J.M. DeMatteis, Chuck Dixon, John Romita, Jr., and John Ostrander.

Over all not a bad first issue. Keep up the good work.

Peter Fisico
Richmond Hill, Ontario
Canada

Well, thanks for the kind words and the criticism, Peter. We've already taken steps to remedy many of the points you made. Color isn't much of an option at this point but as our readership expands...who knows? Something that may interest you is that our fifth issue features the lowdown with Larry Stroman and Todd Johnson on their new Image title (sorry!), Tribe! - JM

Dear Comics Arena,

Put more Hollywood news on comic movie adaptations...rumor has it that Arnold Schwarzenegger may star in *Sgt. Rock*, they are going to make a *Black Panther* movie, and what is the hold up with ERB's *Princess of Mars*?

You guys did a great job with the Punisher interviews. Being a Punisher, Batman, Predator, Terminator fan, this was my main reason for purchasing your publication.

I agree with your Nomad article. With Tarzan, I differ. ERB was going to have Tarzan meet John Carter on Mars, but never got to it before he died. After reading all of the John Carter series, Pellucidar series and Venus series, I was wondering how Tarzan would get to Mars. I think Marc Wheatley did a great job with the time and place rifts as a form of transporting him. It also answered my question on how Tarzan would get to Mars. Don't get me wrong. Tarzan is a great character who has plenty of potential...I know this story upset some hard core Tarzan fans. Hopefully, they will come to like this new style. I like it.

Back to your book. I like the comic size and format of your new publication. Keep up the good work.

David J. Nevin
Sacramento, CA

Hmmm. It seems we received many letters informing us to "keep up the good work". We'll continue to do just that. I'm not sure about some of the projects you mentioned, David, but I can help you by saying ERB has informed us that they were biding their time with Princess of Mars until current day special effects could meet up to the creative standards that were set by Burrough's ingenious mind. Now, they feel that the technology is up to it and the filming is supposedly commencing.

Thanks everybody for your support and keep writing! We need more letters!! - JM

We need more letters!

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December, 1992
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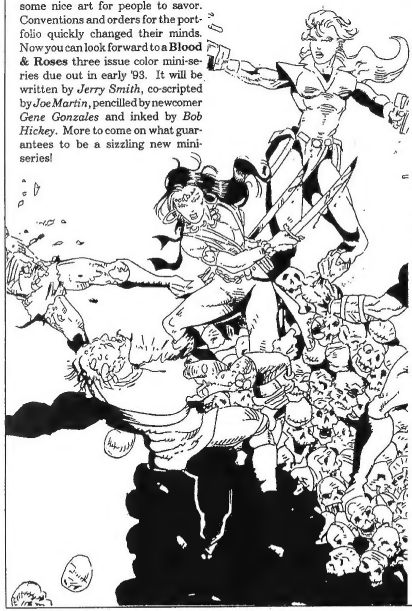
Blood & Roses Become a Mini-Series

It started as a portfolio. Joe Martin and Bob Hickey thought it would be hip to fashion a portfolio of two babes on a raging romp through the timestream. Nothing major, just some nice art for people to savor. Conventions and orders for the portfolio quickly changed their minds. Now you can look forward to a **Blood & Roses** three issue color mini-series due out in early '93. It will be written by *Jerry Smith*, co-scripted by *Joe Martin*, pencilled by newcomer *Gene Gonzales* and inked by *Bob Hickey*. More to come on what guarantees to be a sizzling new mini-series!



BLUE LINE SPONSORS "GET PUBLISHED CONTEST"

Blue Line products have caught on and are still growing since their debut product, **Blue Line Comic Book Pages**, was released in February of 1991. Since that time, over 150,000 pages have been sold internationally. And **Blue Line** has also released a second product, **Blue Line Concept Sketch Pages** which are also doing quite well.

The distributor of these products, **Sky Comics**, is collaborating with **Blue Line** in sponsoring a contest entitled *The Blue Line "Get Published" Contest*. The name is pretty self-explanatory, however for technicalities' sake, this is a competition aimed at giving an amateur artist and **Blue Line** user a chance to have their work published in an actual comic book.

The contest begins July 1st and will run until December 15th. Upon the expiration date a winner will be picked. The winner will be contacted by **Sky Comics** and their story will be scheduled for publication (probably in early 1993)!! The story must be a complete (drawn, inked & lettered) twenty pages in length and collaboration among persons on the creative chores is highly suggested by **Sky Comics** and **Blue Line.** More than one submission is accepted considering the more practice one gets the better he/she becomes. Submit copies only! Also, the front cover of the **Blue Line** pack purchased must be included with the submission. Specially marked packs of **Blue Line** products will begin shipping in July.

Terms and conditions can be acquired by purchasing Blue Line products, in various advertisements or by sending an SASE to *Sky Comics, 264 Main Street, Florence, KY 41042.*

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SEEKER II
REAL NAME: Tracy LeMaster
HEIGHT: 5' 10" WEIGHT: 147 Lbs
HAIR: Red EYES: Green (Red)
RELATIVES: Father, Gary LeMaster. Adopted Son, J.T. Lewis
GROUP AFFILIATION: None
FIRST APPEARANCE: Sky Comics Presents Monthly #1
Tracy LeMaster wanted justice. As a F.B.I. agent she believed in the letter of the law until her fiance Daniel Lewis, the first Seeker died at the hands of a man called Hollister. After Daniels death, Tracy became obcessed with destroying Hollister and was easily possessed by the Seeker Apparition. Now the Seeker is cutting a bloody path across the city in order to fulfill her mission of vengeance.

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